

COLD HARBOR: ANATOMY OF A BATTLE

NORTH & SOUTH

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CIVIL WAR SOCIETY

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 2

**Why Civil War Military History Must
Be Less Than 85 Percent Military**

William W. Freehling

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AT SAMARIA CHURCH**

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*Water Witch***

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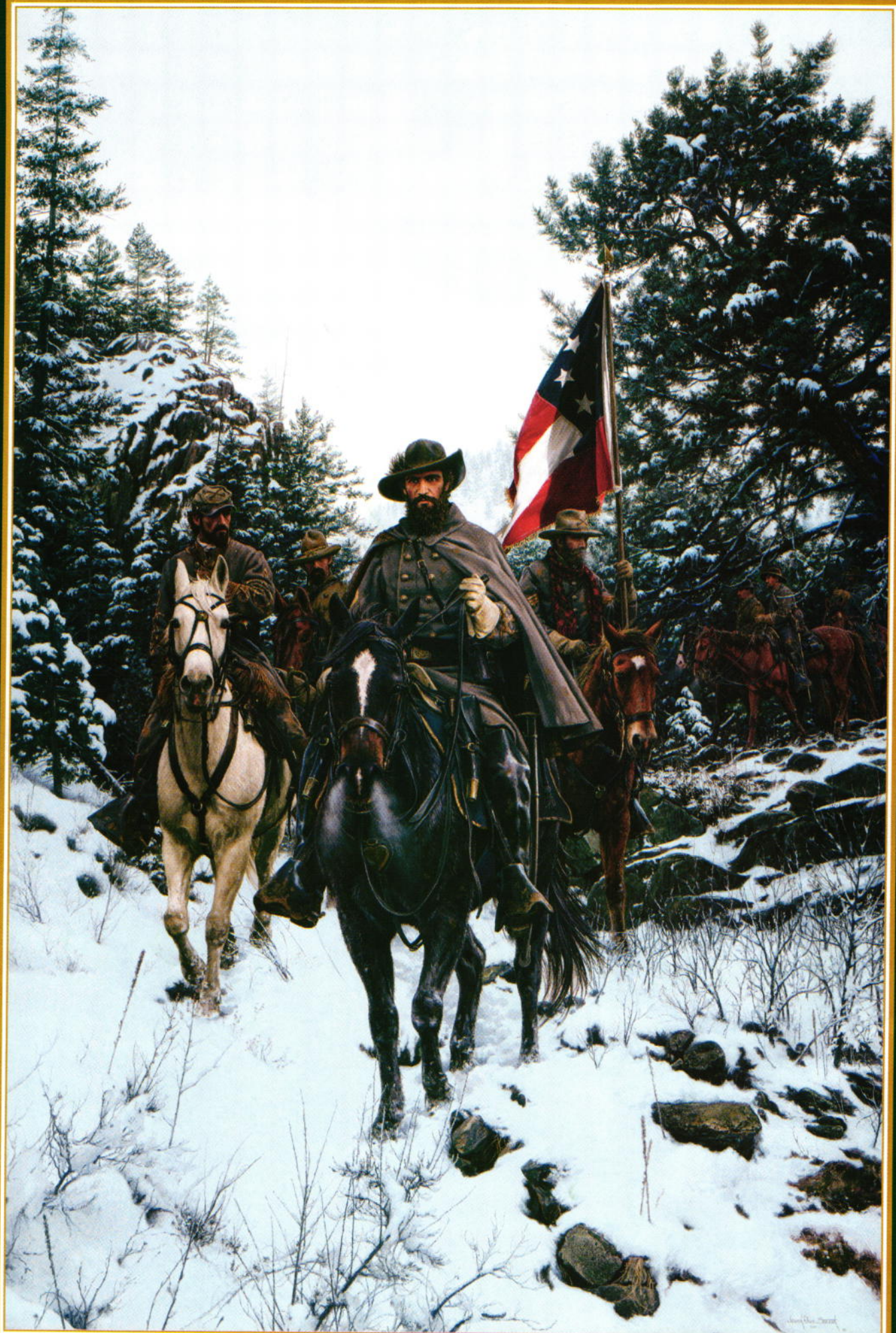
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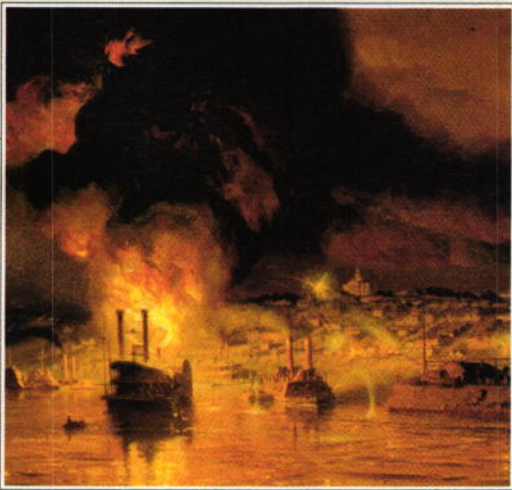
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Detail of "Union Fleet Passing Vicksburg"
("Why Civil War Military History Must Be Less
Than 85 Percent Military," page 14)



Detail of the Cold Harbor map
("Cold Harbor: Anatomy of a Battle," page 40)



Lieutenant Samuel Cormany, 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry
("The Cavalry Fight at Samaria Church," page 64)

NORTH & SOUTH

FEATURES

14 WHY CIVIL WAR MILITARY HISTORY MUST BE LESS THAN 85 PERCENT MILITARY

In *North & South*, volume 4, #6, editor Keith Poulter described *military* history as the "meat" of Civil War studies. Historian William W. Freehling ripostes that without the "potatoes" of *social* history, we cannot have a satisfying meal.

29 BECOMING JOSHUA LAWRENCE CHAMBERLAIN

Nothing in Joshua Chamberlain's life prior to the Civil War suggested that he would one day become known as "The Hero of Little Round Top." In fact, his life during the antebellum years took him about as far afield of military matters and heroism as a man could get.

—Glenn W. LaFantasie

40 COLD HARBOR: ANATOMY OF A BATTLE

Why was the attack launched? How many casualties were there? Which units suffered most, and why? And did Robert E. Lee really have not so much as one man in reserve? Contemporary records reveal that much that we thought we knew about the battle is fiction.

—Gordon C. Rhea

64 THE CAVALRY FIGHT AT SAMARIA CHURCH

After Phil Sheridan's defeat at Trevilian Station, his cavalry retreated toward the James River, accompanied by a wagon train filled with seriously wounded men and prisoners. A single division was detached to act as rearguard at Samaria Church, and that unit swiftly became the target of the entire Confederate cavalry command.—Eric J. Wittenberg

80 REBEL RAID ON THE *WATER WITCH*

"We are Rebels! Give way boys! Three cheers and board her!" The dramatic capture of a Union blockade ship off Savannah.—Derek Smith

DEPARTMENTS

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MAP GRAPHICS DLF Group, David Fuller

PICTURE ARCHIVES Anne Hobart-Lang and Rolf Lang

CARTOONIST Joshua Weinberg

SUBSCRIPTIONS

NORTH & SOUTH, P.O. Box 1027, Escondido, CA 92033-1027

EDITORIAL

NORTH & SOUTH

33756 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667

PH (559) 855-8637 • FX (559) 855-8639

Email: kpoulter@aol.com

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Rande Davis, Marketing and Advertising Director

19713 Beall Street, Poolesville, MD 20837

PH (301) 349-2219 • FX (301) 349-2758

Email: rsdmkt@prodigy.net

WEBSITE

Webmaster: D.H. Rule

www.northandsouthmagazine.com

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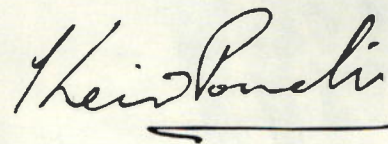
Editorial

MILITARY AND SOCIAL HISTORY

THIS ISSUE'S LEAD ARTICLE, BY WILLIAM FREEHLING, is bounced off my editorial in *North & South*, Volume 4, #6. In self defense, when I remarked in that editorial that 85% of the magazine's fare "will continue to be military," I did not mean to imply that social, military, political, economic, and diplomatic history could or should be altogether divorced from one another. I meant that only about 15% of the magazine's content would be devoted to wholly non-military subjects, such as the causes of the war. I should also point out that the magazine's title, *North & South*, is not intended, and never was intended, to imply that the years 1861-1865 witnessed a war *between* the North on the one hand and the South on the other—which clearly was not the case. Rather the title reflects the notion that the magazine's scope is the war in its entirety.

* * * *

It has been my great pleasure this past year to host the tours put on by the Civil War Society, and thus to meet many of the readers of *North & South*. So successful was this year's program (passing lightly over the cuisine of one hotel that will *not* figure in future programs!) that we are expanding it in the coming year. There will again be four battlefield tours, this time covering North Anna and Cold Harbor (bring this issue, containing Gordon Rhea's article on the battle, with you—Gordon will be leading the tour), Brandy Station, Vicksburg, and Gettysburg. Details can be found on pages 27-28 of this issue. In addition we are planning a rather different kind of event—a conference, to be held in Richmond, the theme of which will be "Could the Confederacy Have Won?" (And of course the implied concomitant: if so, how?) There will be number of keynote speeches, followed by discussion groups led by leading historians. There will also be one side trip, to the excellent Civil War museum at Pamplin Park. This promises to be a very lively and stimulating event, as well as a convivial social occasion, and we anticipate an attendance of well over one hundred. Again, more details can be found on pages 27-28.





Crossfire

EMANCIPATION

I read with interest (*North & South*, Volume 5, #1) that the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves *immediately* in parts of nine states. But is there any evidence that steps were taken to implement the Proclamation in those localities?

—George Potter

San Francisco, California

ED.: Yes. See for instance the broadsheet issued by General Milroy in Winchester, Virginia, on January 5, 1863 (below).

* * * *

In *North & South*, Volume 5, #1, you mention that Joseph Segar in tidewater Virginia, and two others in south Louisiana, were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives prior to January 1, 1863, and that their areas were consequently exempted from the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation. Wasn't there also a congressional election in the Union-occupied part of North Carolina?

—Bill Bidwell, via email

ED.: There was, but whether because of the tardiness of the military commander, or for some other reason, the election was not held until

January 1 (i.e., one day late), and the victor was not allowed to take his seat in congress. This, incidentally, is not the origin of the saying "Close, but no Segar!"

AWARDS

I'd like to know which organizations give awards for Civil War books, and what titles have been short-listed in recent years. Can you help?

—James E. McCusker,

South Deerfield, Massachusetts

ED.: We would like a comprehensive list, too. If any of our readers are members of organizations that give awards, perhaps they could let us know.

SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT

While there is somewhat to recommend the remarks found in "Crossfire" (August 2001, *North & South*, vol. 4, # 5), the comment on former Senator John Ashcroft is an excellent example of PR spin. The commentator suggests that the attorney general was "called a racist merely because he once said he admired General Lee."

No, sir. That is not why John Ashcroft is called a racist. John Ashcroft has demonstrated his racist, bigoted attitudes throughout his public life. As Missouri attorney general, he crusaded against voluntary school desegregation. His abysmal record on abortion, guns, women's rights, gay rights and the separation of church and state speaks for itself.

John Ashcroft is not just a conservative. He stands at the place where Christian fanat-

ics, anti-choicers, militiamen, gun nuts and white supremacists come together. He has acknowledged meeting with the head of the St. Louis chapter of the racist Council of Conservative Citizens to discuss the case of a member jailed on federal charges of conspiring to murder an FBI agent. He defended the leaders of the Confederacy in "Southern Partisan," the neo-Confederate magazine that has done a brisk business selling T-shirts celebrating the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (Timothy McVeigh was wearing one when arrested). Among Ashcroft's many connections on the far right is Larry Pratt, who, as head of Gun Owners of America, said that the surest proof against Colombine-type school shootings is to arm teachers to shoot students.

The voters in Missouri had, in fact, grown so disgusted with him and his extremist attitudes that when he ran for reelection as their senator, they instead elected in his place a dead man! No, it is not merely because he voiced some admiration for dead Confederate leaders that John Ashcroft is deservedly vilified. The commentator who made that claim should be ashamed of himself. With a Ph.D., he ought to know better. Last time I checked, Ph.D. was supposed to mean more than "Piled higher and deeper!"

—William D. (Bill) Mayers,

Canastota, New York

ED.: I thought long and hard before deciding to publish this letter. No matter how much the issues of the Civil War resonate in contemporary politics, I do not want "Crossfire" to degenerate into an exchange of modern polemics. However, having allowed pro-Ashcroft remarks to appear in a previous issue, it seemed only proper to permit a response. Future letters concerning modern politics will not be published.

"WHY DID ABRAHAM LINCOLN CHOOSE WAR?"

ED.: When we published Jim McPherson's article on what caused the war (*North & South*, Volume 4, #1) we stirred up a hornet's nest. I then deliberately solicited an article from Jeffrey Hummel, knowing that his perspective would be very different. That article has stirred up a hornet's nest of its own. A selection of the letters received follows:

* * * *

I'm sure I'm not the only Union man to rise to Professor Hummel's bait ("Why Did Abraham Lincoln Choose War?" *N&S*, Volume 4, #7). The comments below are offered for publication or oblivion, as you choose. Your magazine is more fun than anything!

As Professor Hummel proceeds from his reasoned introduction to his inflammatory conclusion, he describes secession as "debat-

FREEDOM TO SLAVES!

Whereas, the President of the United States did, on the first day of the present month, issue his Proclamation declaring "that all persons held as Slaves in certain designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free," and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the Military and Naval authorities thereof, would recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons. And Whereas, the county of Frederick is included in the territory designated by the Proclamation of the President, in which the Slaves should become free, I therefore hereby notify the citizens of the city of Winchester, and of said County, of said Proclamation, and of my intention to maintain and enforce the same.

I expect all citizens to yield a ready compliance with the Proclamation of the Chief Executive, and I admonish all persons disposed to resist its peaceful enforcement, that upon manifesting such disposition by acts, they will be regarded as rebels in arms against the lawful authority of the Federal Government and dealt with accordingly.

All persons liberated by said Proclamation are admonished to abstain from all violence, and immediately betake themselves to useful occupations. The officers of this command are admonished and ordered to act in accordance with said proclamation and to yield their ready co-operation in its enforcement.

R. H. Milroy,
Brig. Gen'l Commanding.

Jan. 5th, 1863.

able." Debatable, I take it, within the context of the American constitutional tradition? Let us consider this "debatability."

The Articles of Confederation describe the states as sovereign, yet expressly forbid a state to undertake certain actions (e.g., to enter into an alliance with a foreign nation, or with another of the states) and declare the Union to be "perpetual." Well, which is it? A sovereign state can do what it wants. However, I can think of two things a state under the Articles could not do: make treaties, and leave. The Constitution's preamble avows the intention of making the (already perpetual) Union "more perfect." Both documents provide for the addition of states. Neither mentions their subtraction.

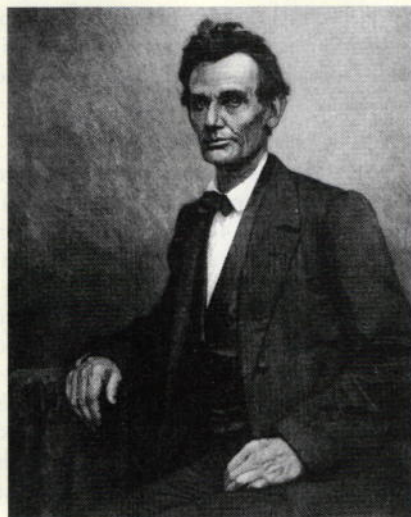
James Madison, in his *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, does not indicate that the subject of secession ever came up. It did not come up in the debate over ratification either. Secession is not referenced in the Constitution originally ratified or in the ten amendments enacted as part of the ratification "package." Neither those who championed the new Constitution, nor those who opposed it, understood the debate on any other terms than these: the union of the states had already been agreed, and was perpetual. The issue was the form of the government, the powers granted to the federal authority, those granted to the states, and those reserved to the people.

During the Adams administration, following passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts, both Virginia and Kentucky passed resolutions in opposition to these measures, which encouraged other states to oppose them. The Virginia Resolution, declaring "a warm attachment to the Union," asks other states to join Virginia in declaring the acts unconstitutional. Kentucky, in its resolution on the same question, declares its attachment to the Union, then resolves: "That although this commonwealth as a party to the federal compact; will bow to the laws of the Union, yet it does at the same time declare, that it will not now, nor ever hereafter, cease to oppose in a constitutional manner [emphasis added], every attempt from what quarter soever offered, to violate that compact." Again, nothing about seceding.

Professor Hummel characterizes Lincoln's election as "fair and legal." Further, no act had been committed, no legislation proposed, and no policy outlined, that usurped any Constitutional right of any state. Secession was not, therefore, justified under any 18th century theory of a right of revolution. No violation of rights had been committed. Secession was not debatable. It was illegal.

Nevertheless, by the early spring of 1861, it was a fact. While Lincoln could have allowed the country to be divided, what law of man or nature obligated him to do so? He had been legally elected and had taken an oath to "faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States." The Union as conceived by the

Founders at the end of the 18th century was unconditional and perpetual. Secession was a 19th century invention to which Lincoln did not subscribe. But he did believe in the nation, in the Constitution, and in his oath of office. South Carolina had no right to secede, and Lincoln was under no obligation to acquiesce. Liberty and democracy, Lincoln understood, are not served through submission to illegality. That's not freedom. It's weakness. The states, the original thirteen that had ratified the Constitution, and those that applied for admission later, had undertaken a solemn obligation to submit to the national authority established by that Constitution.



Abraham Lincoln:

"You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub."

Contrary to Professor Hummel's assertion, "territorial integrity" was not the cause of the government's decision to fight, nor was it the stated "excuse." I accept Lincoln's Gettysburg Address at face value, as the essential expression of his war aim: the integrity of republican government, of liberty under legitimate authority. The persecution fantasies of the planter cabal did not grant them license to abrogate their relationship to the rest of the country.

Secession was insurrection. Once the rebels fired on Fort Sumter, President Lincoln was left with no responsible choice but to put the insurrection down.

And the war came.

—Donald Cleary, *Maplewood, New Jersey*

* * * *

Jeffrey Rogers Hummel's discourse on the start of the Civil War is among the better pieces foisted by the Libertarian faction of the neo-Confederate movement ("Why Did Abraham Lincoln Choose War?" *N&S*, Vol. 4, #7). Libertarian neo-Confederates despise the federal government and revise Civil War history to bludgeon the State.

Hummel, for instance, claims that "insofar as the Civil War was fought to preserve the Union, it was an explicit rejection of the American Revolution." Not so, as Hummel well knows. The Revolutionary War created a new form of representative government, while the Colonies suffered as an appendage of an undemocratic kingdom.

Hummel's argument that Lincoln should not have resorted to war due to secession is somewhat like stating a woman should not defend herself from rape. The Union was endangered, and Lincoln was obligated to respond. Moreover, secession was not an explicit right under the Constitution; even the Confederacy never granted the right of its members to secede.

Hummel seems to find it difficult to understand why the Union needed to be preserved. The reason is found in the Gettysburg Address and elsewhere in plain sight: to allow the Union to break up would substantiate that republican government, then still an experiment, could not succeed. The Union's survival was viewed by pro-democratic forces globally as essential to proving that "government of the people, by the people, for the people" could endure; earlier democratic movements across Europe had failed or been brutally crushed by force. While the poor immigrant flocked to Northern shores and fought in blue to defend humanity's "last hope," European aristocracy rooted for Southern Aristocracy and an end to commoner rule. As noted by James McPherson in his article *The Whole Family of Man*:

Many of [the Tories] expressed delight, at least in private, at the "immortal smash" of the dis-United States in 1861, which demonstrated "the failure of republican institutions in time of pressure." The Earl of Shrewsbury looked upon "the trial of Democracy and its failure" with pleasure. "I believe that the dissolution of the Union is inevitable, and that men before me will live to see an aristocracy established in America."

Hummel's libertarian attraction to the last great English-speaking slave empire seems, well, stupid. The Confederacy was not a bastion of free market ideas or thought. In its short life span the Confederacy adopted conscription, implemented wage, price, and export controls, suspended the right of habeas corpus (something the neo-Confederates consistently condemn Lincoln for), enforced gun control, prevented free movement and association, and even eliminated free speech. Internationally, the Confederacy was seen as struggling FOR the establishment of tyranny, not as fighting against one.

Lincoln was not only right to choose war; it was his duty.

—Chris Centner, *Reston, Virginia*

* * * *

Love your magazine (more of the substance of a journal). I read it cover to cover and am

always eager to receive it. First time correspondent; could not let below article go without a comment.

"Why Did Lincoln Choose War?" by Jeffrey Rogers Hummel [*N&S*, Vol. 4, #7] contains a basic assumption that is almost breathtaking in its daringness. That it would have been a matter of indifference if the American experiment in self-government failed. The United States of America was the only self-governing country in existence. The legitimacy of self-government rested on the existence of this country.

Also, there was no legal or constitutional basis for secession. The South had been denied no legal right in 1860. As Lincoln insisted, no responsible official had threatened to touch slavery in the slave states. The right of Southerners to hold property there was not in jeopardy.

In fact, Southerners were a minority who through federal power controlled the United States government for most of its history up to 1860. The minority effectively ruled the majority for years. When they lost power in a free and legitimate election, the secessionists rejected the constitutionally established means of changing the results of an election—that is, winning the next election. No nation or part of a nation can survive when a minority, at any time or on any particular issue, decides to take their ball and go home. Neither the Confederacy nor any other such entity could survive such a principle. It would devolve into smaller units (states, or parts of states) unable to survive on their own, and beholden to bigger states or countries (e.g., France in Mexico and Britain). And the ability of human beings to rule themselves would effectively be answered with a resounding "no."

This is even setting aside, as the author does, the slavery question. The new southern Confederacy formed itself as a twin of the country it said it could not tolerate any longer. The glaring difference was slavery.

—Donald J. Antweiler, St. Thomas, Missouri

* * * *

No, no, no, no, no, no. Jeffrey Hummel comes at the question "Why Did Abraham Lincoln Choose War?" (Volume 4, #7) with a bias rather greater than the nationalist prejudice he decries. Abraham Lincoln, in the inaugural address Hummel quotes, got it exactly right: if the minority is not bound to accept the will of the majority as expressed in a free election, democracy ceases to exist. I don't care for my property taxes. Should I be free to secede? Some cities don't care for national policy and have freely voted themselves nuclear-free zones. Should they be free to separate themselves from a nation that maintains nuclear weapons? Twenty-odd years ago some western counties of Illinois, contending that they were badly shortchanged in state services, promoted a farcical secession from that state. What if they hadn't had tongue in cheek? Hummel simply assumes that states have a right to secession

not granted to counties, cities, or individuals. In essence, he assumes that state sovereignty ("these United States are...") properly trumps national sovereignty ("the United States is..."). This is the classic disagreement people have been chewing on since at least the 1830s. By publishing this article you have taken the argument a step backward, obscuring the principle truly under debate.

Moreover, I am amused by Hummel's partisan bait-and-switch. At long last, it has become impossible for an intellectually honest person to pretend that slavery was not the single sufficient cause of secession (and thank you, Professor McPherson & Co.). So what is the diehard to do? Why, one merely has to deny that secession caused the war, then carry on as before. Hey, folks; slavery was a monstrous evil and among its consequences was war. Get over it. Yes, it was an evil in which the whole Union participated. Let's agree to share the guilt equally and move on. Yes, a number of nations assembled without consent of the governed have fallen to pieces once freedom became an option. Does that speak to the legal status of U.S. states? Not unless you consider George Washington the moral equivalent of Lenin. And yes, many Southerners did see their loss of national power as a portent of eventual abolition. Hummel seems to assume that this fact alone justifies secession; that is, that the hotheads who drove the secessionist movement (who incidentally wanted a war and deliberately fired the first shot) were simply right in every particular. The moral basis of their movement aside, a careful reading of the treason statutes then in force might be instructive. Lincoln (whose greatness is simply not in doubt), with a magnanimity (and wisdom) almost unknown to history, declined to prosecute Confederates as traitors. Had an Andrew Jackson been in office, I doubt there would be any question about the illegitimacy of secession.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the answer Hummel gives to the title question is not just inadequate, but puerile. Could the true cause of the war really be selfish electoral calculation by those wicked Republicans? Imagine! Amazing that nobody noticed until now. I don't think even the most indignant Confederate newspaper editor ever hit on that one. A more useful answer would lie in an entirely different direction. Abraham Lincoln did not choose war; he had it thrust upon him. That might be an excellent thesis for your next article.

—Brian Smith, Marshalltown, Iowa
ED.: I would take issue with the notion that slavery was the single cause of secession. It certainly was the central one, and one that touched all the others. But there were other factors (all to be explored in later articles).

(continued on page 92)



The Battle of Fort Pillow, May 10, 1862

DO YOU KNOW?

"FORTS" QUIZ: Match the following forts with the cities they defended:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Fort St. Philip | A. Mobile |
| 2. Fort Wagner | B. Memphis |
| 3. Fort Pillow | C. Washington |
| 4. Fort Anderson | D. Petersburg |
| 5. Fort Macon | E. New Orleans |
| 6. Fort McAllister | F. Beaufort |
| 7. Fort Pickens | G. Winchester |
| 8. Fort Sanders | H. Charleston |
| 9. Fort Powell | I. Savannah |
| 10. Fort Gregg | J. Knoxville |
| 11. Star Fort | K. Wilmington |
| 12. Fort Good Hope | L. Pensacola |

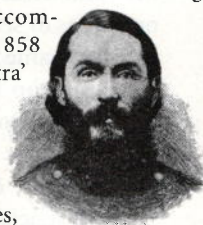
TEASER QUESTION

Name four Union generals who had brothers in the Confederate army.

THE ANSWERS to questions 1-14 are below. If you know the answer to the teaser question, send it on the feedback card to NORTH & SOUTH, 33756 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667. The author of the correct answer drawn from the *North & South* hat will win a free book prize.

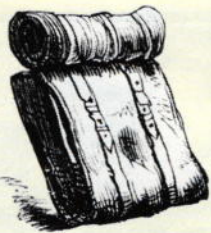
WE HAVE A WINNER

The Teaser question in volume 4, #7, was "Which Union general, in addition to being a lawyer, was an accomplished poet? His 1858 'Anthony and Cleopatra' earned him national recognition." The answer was William H. Lytle. We received nine correct responses, and the name of Bill Welsch of Springfield, New Jersey, was pulled from the *North & South* hat. Bill receives as his prize a copy of the recently published *Articles of War* by Albert Castel.



DO YOU KNOW? ANSWERS

- Hope, Washington
Star Fort, Winchester (12) Fort Good
Mobile (10) Fort Gregg, Petersburg (11)
Fort Sanders, Knoxville (9) Fort Powell,
Savannah (7) Fort Pickens, Pensacola (8)
Fort Macon, Beaufort (6) Fort McAllister,
phis (4) Fort Anderson, Wilmington (5)
Wagner, Charleston (3) Fort Pillow, Mem-
(1) Fort St. Philip, New Orleans (2) Fort



Albert A. Nofi

Knapsack A CIVIL WAR DIGEST

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

- The first regular army officer to die in the war was Lieutenant J.T. Greble of the 2nd Artillery, who fell by his guns at Big Bethel on June 10, 1861. This was also the occasion of the first nonfatal wound received by a regular army officer, Captain Judson Kilpatrick of the 5th New York, who later became a major general of volunteers.
- Mrs. Abner Bartlett of Medford, Mass, born in 1777, knitted over 300 pairs of socks during the war, all of which she donated to the troops, save for two pair which were sent to Mr. Lincoln, who declared them "a very comfortable article to wear."
- When the 3rd Wisconsin broke and ran at the Battle of Winchester (May 25, 1862) Major General Nathaniel Banks called out, "Stop men! Don't you love your country?" To which one of the fleeing men replied, "Yes, by God, and I'm going back to it just as fast as I can."
- Only three percent of all firearms produced in the United States in 1860 were manufactured in the South.
- According to Article 2, Paragraph 5, of Confederate Army Regulations, questions of seniority between officers of the same rank and date of commission, who lacked prior military service, were to be resolved by drawing lots.
- In the course of the Civil War over 12,000 physicians served in the Union army, either as commissioned officers or contract surgeons, of whom more than three hundred died as a result of combat, disease, or accidents.
- Union Major General William S. Rosecrans was a fine commander, if a mite meticulous, and bombarded the War Department with so many telegrams that at one point an exasperated Henry Halleck wired back to

We make every effort to check the accuracy of anecdotes published in "Knapsack," but many were written down years after the event and in some cases are undoubtedly folk tales rather than genuine reminiscences.

- complain about "the enormous expense to the Government of your telegrams, more than that all the other generals in the field."
- The yacht *America*, which captured the "Queen's Cup" in 1851 to bring into being the famed series of sailing races that still bear her name, served as a Confederate blockade runner during the Civil War, until it was sunk off Charleston in early 1862.
- On average at any given moment during the war only about 650 of every thousand troops enrolled in the Union army were present for duty.
- When the 6th Massachusetts passed through Baltimore in May 1898, en route to the Spanish-American War, it found draped across the railroad station a banner reading, "Welcome to the 6th Massachusetts—In 1861 we stoned you as enemies! In 1898 we greet you as brother citizens of a reunited country."
- In January 1864 over 136,000 time-expired Union veterans reenlisted, amounting to about sixteen percent of the men under arms at the time.

SHORT ROUNDS

Bitter Reunion

It is well known that many of the officers on opposite sides in the Civil War had been great friends before secession. Winfield Scott Hancock was among the most popular officers on either side, and often went to great pains to make erstwhile comrades comfortable if they happened to become prisoners of war.

And thereby hangs a tale.

On the evening of May 11, 1864, during the protracted battle of Spotsylvania, Hancock's II Corps took some 2,800 prisoners in a desperate bayonet charge that overran the infamous "Mule Shoe." Among them were two Confederate brigadier generals, Edward "Allegheny" Johnson, another rather big-hearted fellow, and George. H. Stuart. The two were sent to Hancock.

Upon seeing Hancock, Johnson threw his arms around his former comrade. With tears in his eyes he said, "This is damned bad luck; yet I would rather

have had this good fortune to fall to you than to any other man living."

Hancock then turned to Stuart. By chance Hancock had recently paid a courtesy call on Stuart's wife, then residing in Washington. He remarked that Stuart's wife was well, and, offering his hand, asked, "How are you, Stuart?"

To this Stuart, who had a reputation for arrogance, replied, "I am General Stuart, of the Confederate army, and under the present circumstances I decline to take your hand."

Hancock stiffened. Staring at the prisoner, he replied, "And under any other circumstances, General Stuart, I would not have offered it. You should not have put an affront upon me in the presence of my officers and soldiers." With that Hancock stalked off in anger.



Library of Congress

The Matter of Bragg vs. Bragg

Braxton Bragg was not an easy man to get along with. This was evident long before he rose to the highest levels of command in the Confederate army. Indeed, with the possible exception of Jefferson Davis, with whom he had a surprisingly cordial relationship, Bragg seems to have quarreled with everyone in the service from the time he graduated from West Point in 1837. In his *Memoirs*, written many years afterward, Ulysses S. Grant recounted a tale which, whether true or not, gives some notion of Bragg's temperament.

It seems that Braxton Bragg was once the quartermaster on a small frontier post. As the second ranking officer, Bragg naturally assumed command when the senior officer had to absent himself for a time. Bragg performed his duties as acting post commander with

***Get at the enemy as quick as you can.
Hit him as hard as you can; and keep moving on.***

— Ulysses S. Grant

great diligence. Of course, he also had to tend to the quartermaster's duties as well.

As Grant tells it, in the course of performing his duties as post commander, Bragg made a request of the post quartermaster. Due to some technicality, the post quartermaster found it necessary to reject the request. The rejection caused the acting post commander to direct an inquiry to the post quartermaster demanding an explanation as to the reasons for the latter's rejection of the request. The post quartermaster replied to this, citing various regulations. The acting post commander thereupon responded by citing other regulations. And so it went, as several such communications passed back and forth between the acting post commander and the post quartermaster, that is, between Bragg and Bragg. The matter had still not been resolved by the time the real post commander returned.

Reviewing the actions which the acting post commander had taken during his absence, the post commander came upon the correspondence between the former and the post quartermaster, that is, between Bragg and Bragg. "My God, Mr. Bragg," he cried out, "you have quarreled with every officer in the Army, and now you are quarreling with yourself!"

Promotion by Merit

Confederate Brigadier General John B. Magruder's manner was such as to earn his the nickname "Prince John." Yet there appears to have been another side to his personality, as illustrated by an incident that occurred in late 1861, when he was in command of Confederate forces on the Virginia Peninsula.

Well aware of the pernicious effects of liquor on troops, particularly green troops, Magruder had issued very careful orders prohibiting liquor in camp.

One day he chanced to notice a soldier taking a pull from his canteen in a manner which suggested that the contents were rather more interesting than mere water.

What happened next is best told from the pages of *Our Living and Our Dead*, a publication of the North Carolina branch of the Southern Historical Society.

"What is your name and rank, Sir?" asked the general.

"My name is Sharpe, and I am a private in the 1st North Carolina!" replied the soldier.

"What is that in your canteen, sir?" demanded the general.

"Water, sir!" promptly answered Private Sharpe.

"Give me a drink of that water, Private Sharpe," said Magruder.

The soldier was very much frightened, but was compelled to hand his canteen to the gallant general, who immedi-

Average Age of the Civil War Generals

ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING THINGS about the 1,008 generals who served during the Civil War is their relative youth. On the eve of the Civil War, the regular army had just one major general and three brigadier generals, all of whom were getting on in years. Their average age was just over seventy-one. The youngest, Brigadier General William S. Harney, was sixty-one, a decade younger than any of the other three.

REGULAR ARMY GENERALS ON JANUARY 1, 1861

SEN. ¹	RANK	NAME	BORN	JOINED ²
1st	Major General	Winfield Scott	1786	1808
2nd	Brigadier General	David E. Twiggs	1790	1812
3rd	Brigadier General	John E. Wool	1784	1812
4th	Brigadier General	William S. Harney	1800	1818

1. Sen. = seniority; 2. Joined = year of entry into the service.

NOTE: Only full rank regular army general officers are listed; men with brevets (e.g., Albert Sidney Johnston) or those administratively ranking as generals (e.g., Joseph E. Johnston, QM General of the Army) are omitted.

The outbreak of hostilities witnessed the removal of two of these officers from command. Twiggs went over to the Confederacy, while Harney was relieved after making an injudicious arrangement with the secessionist Missouri State Guard. Although Scott and Wool rendered surprisingly useful service to the Union, neither was capable of taking the field. This meant that a lot of new generals were needed, by both sides, since the Confederacy started out with none at all.

During the course of the war 583 men served as generals in the Union army and 425 in the Confederate army. Most of these men were surprisingly young. In fact, their average age at the outbreak of the war was just thirty-seven.

AVERAGE AGE OF CIVIL WAR GENERALS BY RANK

RANK	US: Number	Age	CSA: Number	Age
Brigadier General	450	37	328	36
Major General	132	39	72	37
Lieutenant General	1	38	17	41
General	0	0	8	48
TOTAL:	583	37	425	37

NOTES: Figures are for the highest rank held. Age is calculated as of the end of 1860. Union figures omit Twiggs, listed with the Confederacy. Except for the figure for Confederate full generals, which includes one man with acting and one with temporary rank, only men holding full rank line commissions in the respective regular or volunteer armies are included. The table thus omits generals in the state militias, men holding brevets, those with staff positions having equated rank as generals, or, in the Confederate army, those "assigned to duty as generals" but never actually commissioned.

To put these figures in some perspective, it is worth noting that during World War II the average age of the nearly 1,600 generals in the United States Army—including the Army Air Forces—was over fifty, despite nearly one hundred "boy generals," particularly in the Air Force. In fact, only about six percent of the World War II crop of generals was thirty-seven or younger.

ately proceeded to take a long and steady "pull" therefrom. Instead of punishing Sharpe, very much to the astonishment of that individual, Magruder thus addressed him:

"You are no longer Private Sharpe, sir, you are Corporal Sharpe."

Sharpe continued to hang around the general's headquarters, and in a short time that officer called out to him: "Corporal Sharpe, you will please hand me another drink of that water of yours!"

The canteen was promptly handed forth by the new-made corporal; the general took another smile and remarked, "You are no longer Corporal Sharpe, sir, you are Sergeant Sharpe!"

Sharpe was sharp enough to see that if his canteen only held out he was apt to attain the highest rank the general could confer upon him, and while there was a drop left he was determined to remain in calling distance. In about a quarter of an hour Magruder again called out lustily: "Sergeant Sharpe, you will please give me another drink of that water of yours."

The canteen was eagerly extended, and the general said: "You are no longer Sergeant Sharpe, sir, you are Lieutenant Sharpe!"

Sharpe, upon examining the canteen, found its contents about "played out." He immediately proceeded to trot around camp for the purpose of hunting up more "water"; but very much to his disappointment he could not find any. While passing near Magruder's tent in search of the much desired article, that officer, seeing him, exclaimed: "Lieutenant Sharpe, you will please give me another drink of that water of yours."

Poor Sharpe, finding that he could do nothing toward replenishing his canteen, and that his chance for further promotion was thus "blocked," exclaimed, "General, it is 'played out,' and I am sorry for it; for if it had held out I'll be d—d if I would not have been a brigadier-general before night!"

PROFILE

The Great Gold Hoax

On the morning of May 18, 1864, some New Yorkers were stunned when *The Journal of Commerce* and *The World* published a proclamation by President Lincoln which revealed that U.S. Grant's newly launched offensive against Robert

E. Lee had ended in a bloody disaster. Reading on, they learned that Lincoln had proclaimed a day of "fasting, humiliation, and prayer," and had called for the drafting of an additional 400,000 men. The devastating news set shock waves through the stock exchange and the price of gold shot up by ten percent. But then cooler heads prevailed. No such news had appeared in the city's five other dailies. Perhaps it was all a hoax.

Howard reported that Lincoln had sneaked through secessionist Baltimore wearing a "Scotch cap and military cloak."

Meanwhile, news of the panic had reached Washington. The story caught Lincoln in a bind, for Grant's operations were not going as well as planned, and he had intended to issue a call for an additional 200,000 volunteers. With a little urging by Secretary of State William Seward and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who believed the incident was part of a conspiracy to discredit the administration, Lincoln ordered the seizure of the two offending papers and the Independent Telegraph Company, which had carried the dispatch. Although Major General John A. Dix, commanding in New York, believed that the two papers were themselves probably the victims of a hoax, he sent his troops to occupy their offices, which caused an uproar throughout the journalistic community. As it turned out, Dix was right. A massive hoax had been perpetrated.

Late on May 17 all of the city's seven major dailies had received the story, which was delivered to their offices on Associated Press "flimsies." However, the night editor at one of them, smelling a rat, had made a quick inquiry of the A.P. When the A.P. denied any knowledge of the dispatch, he had killed the story and alerted the other papers. But by the time *The Journal of Commerce* and *The World* received the word their morning editions had already gone out.

The object of the hoax was not to inflict injury on the administration but rather to boost the price of gold so that the perpetrators could make a killing, and, perhaps, to tweak the noses of the journalistic establishment. The perpetrator was Joseph Howard, Jr. (1833-1908), an imaginative, if unethical, journalist.

A native of Brooklyn, Howard had already perpetrated one notable hoax on the public in March 1861. In a fabricated story that still occasionally turns up in less rigorous treatments of the war, Howard reported that Lincoln, en route to Washington for his inauguration, had sneaked through secessionist Baltimore wearing a "Scotch cap and military cloak."

Howard covered most of the early battles in the East for *The New-York Times*. His vivid, often creative reporting earned him a byline, an unusual distinction in those days. He was resourceful and imaginative in seeking out stories and preventing his rivals from doing the same. For a time Howard cultivated the friendship of Mrs. Lincoln, gaining some valuable tidbits on policy matters. On one occasion, having gotten to the only open telegraph line ahead of his rivals, he padded a dispatch with lengthy portions of *The Bible* to monopolize the line. The cost was considerable, but the paper gladly paid it for the privilege of getting a scoop. When the press was barred from the funeral of Major General Philip Kearny, Howard managed to infiltrate the rites in the guise of a Roman Catholic priest.

In early 1864 he had secured the post of city editor at *The Brooklyn Eagle*. Most newspapermen would have considered this a plum, but Howard found it unsatisfactory. Efforts to secure employment at some of the more prestigious papers proved fruitless, for Howard had acquired a bad odor for creative reporting in some journalistic circles. Bored and annoyed, he hit upon the idea of having a little fun at the expense of the journalistic establishment and making a profit at the same time. With the aid of Francis A. Mallison, an *Eagle* reporter, Howard invested heavily in gold in the early spring of 1864. He then procured some A.P. telegraph "flimsies" and forged the bogus dispatch. It was a clever scheme, and actually did work. But in the end Howard outsmarted himself.

Shortly before May 18 Howard had bragged to several people that he was about to make a killing in gold. Two days after the bogus story broke he was arrested. Not wanting to take the rap alone, Howard implicated Mallison. Lincoln ordered the two incarcerated without trial in Fort Lafayette, a harbor defense installation on a reef in The Narrows,

where they languished for almost three months. Then, rather surprisingly, the famous Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, an ardent supporter of the administration and the war effort, interceded for their release. By then *The World* and *The Journal of Commerce* had already been returned to their owners. But the public outcry provoked by their seizure echoed for some time. Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, a strong foe of the administration, even attempted to have General Dix indicted.

Neither Howard nor Mallison were brought to trial for the hoax. Surprisingly, Howard's career didn't suffer either, despite committing what is arguably the most heinous of all journalistic crimes, the fabrication of a story. After the war Howard worked on various papers, had a widely syndicated column in the 1880s, and even served for a time as president of the New York Press Club. His sometimes outrageous approach to journalism earned him a widespread reputation, and he became the model for a number of fictional journalists, including two of Jules Verne's best, Alcide Jolivet of *Michael Strogoff* and Claudius Bombarnac of *The Special Correspondent*. □

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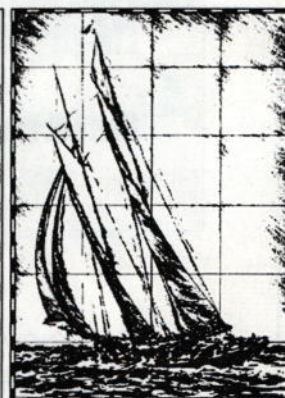
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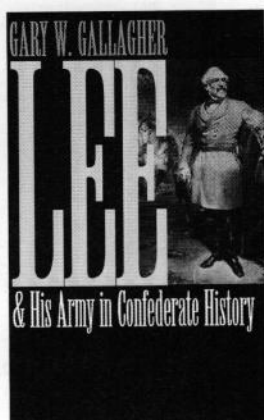
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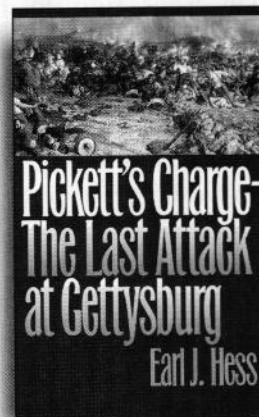


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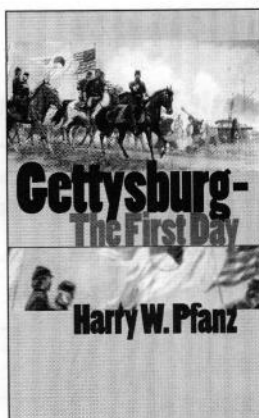
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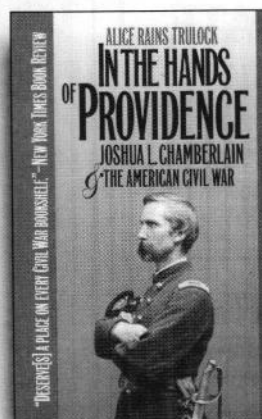
In the Hands of Providence

Joshua L. Chamberlain and the American Civil War

ALICE RAINS TRULOCK

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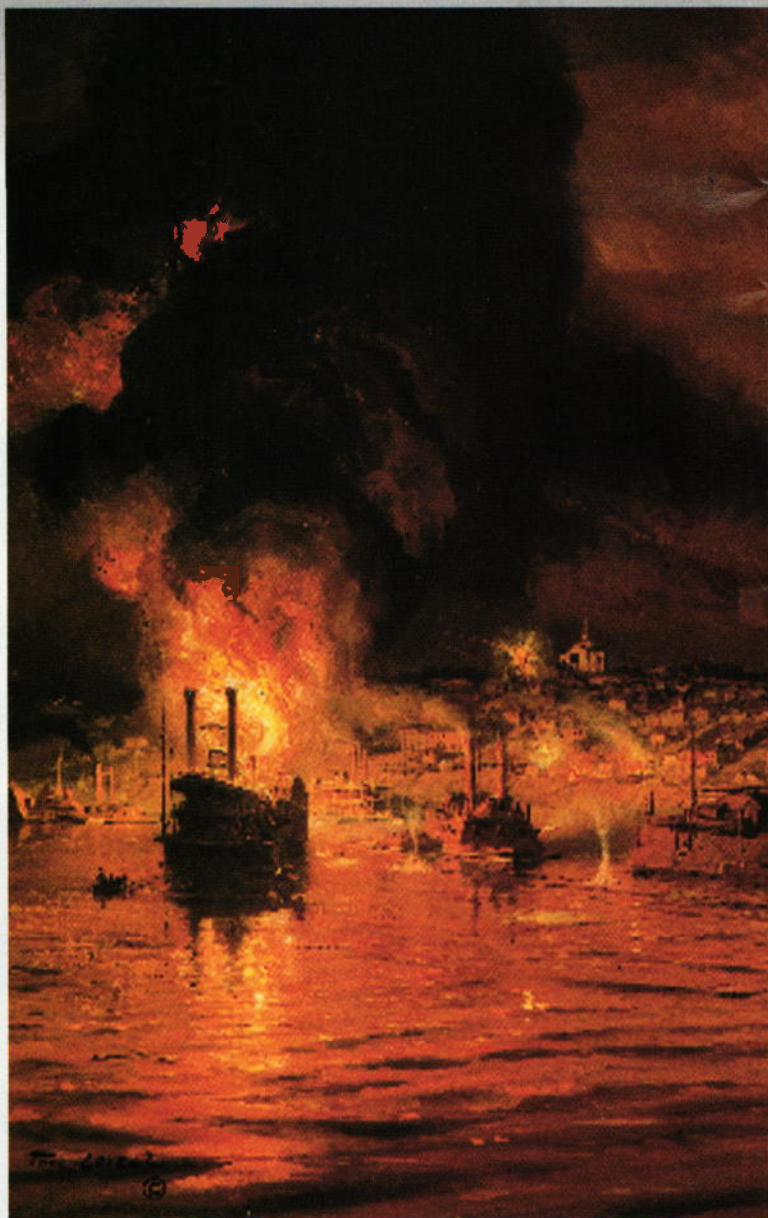
WHY CIVIL WAR MILITARY HISTORY MUST BE LESS THAN 85 PERCENT MILITARY

The heart of traditional Civil War history—its military tales—now faces siege from the New Social History.¹ Traditional Civil War buffs will not tolerate much collaboration with that hated enemy. Thus Civil War editors must consider rationing their nonmilitary pages, lest they empty their subscription lists. This magazine's editor recently reassured buff-readers that he "will continue" to publish at least "85%" military material, "for *military* history is the meat of the matter, and...we run the risk of becoming historical vegetarians—studying everything *but* the strictly military." *

The reassurance makes some sense intellectually no less than commercially. In our Politically Correct era, many academic historians bash (or ignore) the Old American History. That traditional narrative, written from the top down, featured military/political epics about white male elites. Younger historians especially now instead cherish a New Social History. Their innovative story, written from the bottom up, features gender (especially women) and race (especially blacks).

* *North & South*, volume 4, #6, August 2001, p. 4.

Above: "The Union Fleet Passing Vicksburg," by Tom Lovell, courtesy The Greenwich Workshop, Inc., Trumbull, Connecticut. Union Gunboats and transports run the gauntlet of Confederate guns at Vicksburg. The campaign led to a successful siege and the division of the Confederacy.



THE YOUTHFUL INVASION OF THE CIVIL WAR field has inflicted lamentable casualties. The losses have sadly reduced both the number of Civil War courses and academic emphases on how the great combat was fought. An unfortunate smugness can also creep into the PC tone—an insinuation that military history, indeed any history from the top down, is lesser stuff, Neanderthal stuff.

Occasionally, a quaint analytical slant further infects PC writing, as in the odd theory that southern wives caused the Confederacy to lose the war. Such analyses defy the iron law of any successful social analysis of military/political events—DEMONSTRATE that A, the social current rising from the bottom, helped cause B, the political/military happening dominating the top. Thus the "woman doomed the Confederacy" argument floats only atop southern wives' letters to their soldier husbands late in the war, begging their favorite warriors to come save the home front.² No evidence is added that the husband actually received the letter at the battle front, or that he actually deserted his battlefield comrades, or that such letters were the cause of desertion rather than the horrendous military conditions facing Robert E. Lee's late war unfortunates. In the face of such



distractions, no wonder that buffs want to bar the PC crowd from the citadels.

The question remains whether an eighty-five percent narrowly military emphasis can best illuminate the battlefield. I will not here question whether the war's origins, social consequences, and aftermath merit only fifteen percent of *North & South's* pages, although on another occasion I would urge a larger percentage. Too little attention to nonmilitary causes and nonmilitary results robs buffs of their best counterattack: that their favorite subject is at the vital center of almost any American history subject before and after the war, including the PC favorites. Blacks' role in the Civil War, for example, provides superb material about the nature of prewar slavery, a PC obsession. With such information, military specialists need no longer suffer insult for interest in a supposedly lesser subject. They can charge with confidence that battle history must invade all American nineteenth century inquiries.

Wider matters aside, my interest here narrows to whether the battlefield itself can be intelligible with but fifteen percent of the material focused on nonmilitary concerns. I would at least double that fifteen percent figure, as much as I love the

strictly battlefield lore. In this war, not two armies but two cultures confronted each other; and cultural characteristics off the battlefield profoundly influenced the way the blood was spilled.

Witness the most startling fact about the combating cultures. The title of this magazine aside, the Civil War did *NOT* pit the North against the South. It pitted the Confederacy, with the allegiance of most whites in eleven southern states (and a minority in four others), against the Union, with the allegiance of almost everyone in the eighteen northern states, *plus* the allegiance of most whites in five southern states, *plus* the potential allegiance of most slaves on invaded Confederate terrain.

The Confederacy's most damaging loss of southern resources occurred farthest northward in the South. When the four Border South states of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware decided not to secede, and Western Virginia decided to secede from Confederate Virginia, the Confederacy lost and the Union retained twenty-five percent of the southern land mass, thirty-seven percent of southern whites, eleven percent of southern slaves, fifty percent of southern industry, and three of the four largest southern cities (Baltimore, St. Louis, and Louisville). A counter-fact illustrates the importance of the fact

that Confederates had to whip a third of white Southerners as well as almost all Northerners. What if all the Border South states had embraced the Confederacy and five Border North states (say Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey) had departed the Union?! The largest consequences of white border Southerners' characteristic unionism included 200,000 southern white men in Union blue (compared to 90,000 borderites who donned Confederate gray), the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's contribution of the material (and repair) for the largest East-West means of landed transport, the relatively easy Union occupation of the upper third of southern terrain, and the relatively easy Union protection of Washington D.C. (which would surely have been at least temporarily lost if Maryland had seceded).

The contrasting nature of the Union's and Confederacy's menial labor force became a second militarily crucial social fact. While the Union suffered some lower class unrest (especially during the New York draft riots), and while some slaves, especially house servants, served their soldier-masters as Black Confederates (including many more loyal family retainers than PC academics credit), by far the majority of northern lower class employees remained loyal to the Union, and by far the majority of southern slaves, especially field hands, fled their masters, whenever Union armies marched close. Something like 600,000 slaves ran to Union sanctuary during the Civil War. Something like 150,000 of the fugitives joined the Union armed forces (augmented by some 50,000 northern free blacks). Perhaps more important, the Yankees trusted their lower class to serve in the Union army, while the Confederates kept almost their entire black proletariat off the battlefields.

Another counter-fact illustrates why these differences in lower classes proved crucial. What if Lee's invasions of Union terrain had resulted in 600,000 free laborers fleeing their employers, a quarter of them to join the Confederate armed forces?! What if, furthermore, the Union authorities, fearing mass runaways, had barred the northern lower class from serving in the army?! The invaded Confederacy suffered precisely those costly vulnerabilities.

The fact that so many Southerners, black and white, favored the Union ultimately produced 450,000 southern soldiers in Union blue (including 100,000 whites from the *Confederate* states). Since around 900,000 Southerners joined the Confederate armed forces, a startling one out of every three southern Civil War soldiers tried to kill Confederate troops. The 450,000 *southern* Union soldiers outnumbered *all* the Union's fatalities *plus* the usual number of soldiers in Lee's Virginia army (or in other words, a Southerner more than replaced every dead northern soldier in this exhausting war of attrition!). Furthermore, the southern men in blue outnumbered *twice* the Union soldiers drafted in the Civil War (or in other words, the Union's southern recruits made the draft far less onerous than it would have been, if a Northerner had had to replace every slain Northerner).

The drain of Southerners, black and white, to the Union army climaxed an almost century-long population drift, profoundly based on the nature of U.S. slave and free labor societies and deeply undercutting the Confederates' military poten-

tial. In 1790, the northern and southern populations stood almost dead equal in size. Then in the nineteenth century, U.S. free labor areas became a beacon of hope to impoverished white Europeans. These new Americans emigrated to northern states by the millions and usually shunned slave labor states. (That fabulous Irishman, Confederate Major General Patrick Cleburne, was a magnificent exception.) Meanwhile in 1807, the U.S. Congress, in one of its most important acts ever, shuttered the slave trade between Africa and U.S. ports. The closure not only reduced slave labor states' potential population but also channeled a slave drain from the Upper to the Lower South. Especially the cotton states had to procure new slaves from especially the Border South. The slave drain made U.S. slaveholders especially powerful southward—mightier than masters anywhere else in the New World. The drain of blacks downward also made slavery especially attenuated northward in the southern states—almost as spotty as slavery had been southward in the northern states before the American Revolution.



Although the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was vulnerable to attack—as here at Harper's Ferry—it remained a vital Union asset.

Where southern states had fifty percent of the American population in 1790, the number had dropped to thirty-nine percent in 1860. Worse, where the free labor system was thick throughout the North, the slave labor system became sparse in too many areas of the Border South. That attenuation ultimately reduced the rebel military's potential pool of the American population from the fifteen slave states' thirty-nine percent to the eleven Confederate states' twenty-seven percent. Worse still, most northern employees fondly regarded their opportunities in a free labor system, while most (but not all!) southern slaves fondly regarded their chance to run toward liberty. Slaves' usual preference for freedom helped reduce the Confederacy's potential military pool of the American population from the Confederate states' twenty-seven percent to the *white* Confederacy's fifteen percent. A three to seventeen shortfall in potential military personnel: Not many societies have overcome such huge discrepancies, especially not in a long war of attrition.

More has been made of the less important, but still militarily significant, economic difference between U.S. slave labor and free labor societies. The South's capitalists profited too much from slave labor on agrarian plantations to invest extensively in industry (save in the less enslaved, ultimately anti-Confederate

Border South!). The North's capitalists, in contrast, used free labor to develop a far larger industrial plant. The difference in manufacturing output saddled the Confederacy with yet another shortfall in the one to nine range—a huge handicap in the first modern industrial war.

The Confederacy played economic catch up amazingly well in all areas except for the big ticket, most sophisticated manufactured products. The rebel infantry most often carried enough rifles and bullets. But so underdeveloped a culture could not catch up with the Yankee behemoths that controlled transportation, especially railroads and ships.



The New York draft riots: dramatic though they were, lower class unrest in the North paled in comparison to slave unrest in the South.

The Union's railroad advantage surpassed even its far better, far more extensive tracks and locomotives. Yankee engineers' superiority in railroad repair allowed Yankee generals to make almost as good use of *southern* rails as did the rebels. (Sherman's army, so it was said, carried railroad tracks in their knapsacks!) The Union navy loomed even more superior, despite some (again amazing) southern catch ups with smaller ironclads. Rebels' lesser ships, worse railroads, narrower pool of potential recruits, shakier allegiances on their borders, and greater tendency of their proletariat to flee—all this weakness added up to social handicaps that crippled Confederate grand strategy and battlefield maneuvers in the strictly military phases of the Civil War.

CONFEDERATE GRAND STRATEGY

Lee's and Jefferson Davis' well-known grand strategy, a sometimes aggressively offensive way of defending terrain, has often been criticized for allegedly bleeding the undermanned Confederacy to death. It is indeed true that from a narrowly military point of view, the new rifled shoulder arms gave defenders a great advantage over assaulters who charged protected positions. Lee did indeed sometimes charge rather than relentlessly retreat. By always defending instead of sometimes attacking, Lee would supposedly have forced Union men to do all the attacking (and most of the dying).

This misguided criticism illuminates the inadequacy of the narrowly military point of view. The social circumstances of the war made a relentless retreat, ever deeper into Confederate terrain, a non-option. Endless backpedaling, ever deeper into

the plantation South, would have led to many more slaves escaping and many more local areas crying that the national army devastated their interests. Slinking from the Yankees would have also violated the Southern sense of honor—the heart and soul of this proud culture. Gary Gallagher rightly reminds us that the aggressive Lee, akin to the Southerners who aggressively defended slavery before the war, became just the hero to sustain Confederate morale.³

Above all else, slinking backward as opposed to striking for victory would have invited Lee's socially based dread, a war of attrition. Lee knew that the longer the war, the dimmer were his chances. He needed to win fast, discouraging the Union from a long-term pressing of its societal advantages. Alternatively (although Lee had less hope for this remoter possibility), quick Confederate triumphs might secure enough English aid to offset Union numbers. Lee's spectacular short-term military gambles underscored how great were his long-term nonmilitary disadvantages.

UNION GRAND STRATEGY

Two related concepts, the anaconda and the siege, drove the Union's grand strategy. The Union's societal advantages swelled both strangling conceptions with their choking power.

Before the Civil War, Republicans sought a ring of fire around the slaveholders. Antislavery politicians would surround the slave states with non-slaveholding territories and states, bringing heat to bear on the alleged monster trapped inside. Lincoln's first head general, Winfield Scott, reformulated the ring of fire as a circle of water. He would control the rivers and oceans around the eastern Confederacy. Then the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean would separate Confederate slaveholders from sustenance beyond their nation.

Ulysses S. Grant later strove to establish two rings of soldiers within Scott's watery encirclement. Union troops would form Grant's outer landed ring by marching from the Mississippi to the Atlantic over largely Middle South terrain, severing Lee's army from the Lower South and encircling the Virginia theater of war. Inside that landed encirclement, itself inside a watery ring, Grant drove for a third circle, this time around Lee's Virginia army. A single ring of fire had evolved into a triple anaconda, and that is how the Union ultimately wore out the Confederacy.

The three anacondas especially wore down the Confederacy's staying power. Undermanned rebels had to man two landed fronts at once, plus defend sea ports. The assignment stretched too few men too thin. The manpower scarcity mounted after so many Southerners replaced fallen Yankees rather than fallen Confederates. Richard McMurry reminds us that the two great rebel armies suffered two different fates, with Lee's eastern army well-nigh unbeatable in its smaller eastern theater, until the Virginian's highly beatable western fellows collapsed inside their vast western theater.⁴ The triple anaconda made the Civil War like one of those temporarily close modern basketball games between two evenly matched *first* teams. The suspense lasts only until one side's mightier reserves turn a stalemate into a rout. No wonder that the canny Lee felt compelled to gamble on victory in a great big hurry.

Right: 107th Colored Infantry provost guard at Fort Corcoran. One hundred thousand blacks served in the Union army and navy.

Below: men of the 1st Arkansas (Union) Cavalry. One hundred thousand *whites* from the Confederate states also fought for the Union.

From left to right: Sergeant Jake Yoes, Co. D, 1st Arkansas Union Cavalry (*Washington County Historical Society*); Private James Madison Jones, Company B, 1st Arkansas Union Cavalry, and Private George Washington Howry, Co. E, 1st Arkansas Union Cavalry (*both Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park*).



Library of Congress



Lee particularly feared that the triple anaconda would slowly squeeze him in that climactic encirclement, the siege on an individual battlefield. Defensive riflemen, shielded by earthworks, usually could annihilate charging foot soldiers. The assaulter, however, could take away the defense's advantages by laying a well fortified siege. The thick encirclement could starve defenders out of their earthworks, forcing them to charge beyond their protection or die. Almost all the Union's pivotal victories came after strangling sieges, including Fort Donelson, Vicksburg, Atlanta, Petersburg, and Appomattox. These circles of death doomed over 50,000 Confederates to capture, more than Lee lost in his much-criticized charges. Suffering a successful siege, not mounting an unsuccessful charge, was the great Civil War killer. Lee and Grant ended up on the same grand strategic page: perfected anacondas and sieges would be the beginning of the end.

Lee's end was a very long time coming, for the anaconda/siege strategy proved exasperatingly difficult and costly, especially in its demand for ever more manpower. That ring of water had to be captured, including such formidable naval targets as Vicksburg and Wilmington's Fort Fisher. That first ring of soldiers had to be closed by marching all the way down from Illinois to Vicksburg, then all the way over from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, despite those defensive rifles, those earthworks, and a land mass more sprawling than Western Europe's. That second ring of soldiers had to be closed inside Virginia, to trap the elusive Lee in a climactic siege.

The triple closures required all the Union's social advantages. The watery anaconda required naval superiority. The multiple landed rings required the North's greater numbers, plus the Southerners, black and white, who favored the Union. Keeping an army inside the ocean-sized Confederate terrain often required control of railroads, lest the invading troops lose their supply lines. Controlling the huge southern surface required some relatively free passages over large chunks of southern terrain, lest every exhausting inch need be overwhelmed. Climactic sieges required manpower advantages near two to one, lest the encirclement run thin and the trapped victims too early escape.

The relative nonmilitary weakness of slaveholding society slowly gave free labor culture the military edge it needed, to consolidate the triple circles. The superior Union navy early secured New Orleans, the Confederacy's largest city, and Memphis, black belt Tennessee's center. The Border South's predominant unionism allowed Union armies to walk relatively untouched over the upper third of the South's elephant-sized terrain. The Union army, after striding inside the Middle and Lower South, attracted hundreds of thousands of runaway slaves. Many ex-slaves entered the army, especially helping to garrison conquered western terrain when the Union forces moved east. The majority of border Southerners not only failed to resist the Yankee invasion but joined with the invaders, to aid and abet the Union sweep over the Middle South. After four years of exhausting warfare, there proved to be too many Northerners, and too many northern ships and railroads, and too many Southerners who stepped into the place of fallen Union soldiers for Robert E. Lee's army to escape death by strangulation.

FOUR BATTLEFIELDS

Grand strategy only partially explains military combat. Each battle exudes its own story, often in defiance of theoretical designs; and all the battles together form the architecture of the story. With individual battles, as with grand strategy, the social roots of Civil War military triumph proved crucial. Four battles especially exemplified the nonbattlefield impact on Civil War military victory.

The battles chosen here all transpired beyond Virginia, for the Union largely won its victory outside the Old Dominion. Lee could long lock his adversaries in a localized Virginia stalemate. But in the larger Confederacy, Union forces progressively

ripped apart stalemates, before closing in on Virginia to end three years of standoff.

When one excessively concentrates on Lee and Virginia before the anaconda closed in, the war looks closer than it was. The Border South and slave defections also look less important, the Union naval superiority less crucial, the difference in manpower less important. But out West, these social factors early helped create the makings of a rout, although one that took years to choke Lee.

FORTS HENRY AND DONELSON

Grant scored the first breakthrough in the war (early February 1862) when he swept Forts Henry and Donelson in northernmost Tennessee, just south of the Kentucky border. Only these twin installations, eleven miles apart, guarded the Tennessee River, all the way down to Alabama, and the Cumberland River, all the way over to Nashville. After the forts fell, the entire Confederate western army fell into panicky retreat, out of lower Kentucky, out of western and central Tennessee, only able to regroup in Corinth, Mississippi. The first thrust of the landed anaconda had swept up the upper two-thirds of the Mississippi Valley, after only ten days of battle and with under 2,000 fatalities.

At the heart of this early Confederate disaster lay the western Border South's greater affection for the Union, itself caused by the relatively thin concentration of slavery in the northernmost South. Preparations for battle largely occurred in Kentucky. This most enslaved Border South state turned out to be insufficiently enslaved. Grant effortlessly occupied Paducah and his colleague Don Carlos Buell easily occupied Louisville, while Confederates under Kentucky's own native son, Albert Sidney Johnston, massed in Bowling Green. Johnston futilely complained to Jefferson Davis that too few troops had arrived from the East to sustain western defenses.

Actually, too few Kentuckians had arrived at Bowling Green to save their state from Yankee "invaders." Kentucky contributed only six percent of Sidney Johnston's Bowling Green infantry regiments, in this showdown for the Blue Grass. Don Carlos Buell enlisted fourteen times more infantry regiments from Johnston's home state. Moreover, most Kentuckians chose to sit out this fight on their own terrain. To cite the obvious counterfactual comparison, imagine how Robert E. Lee would have fared in Virginia if only six percent of his troops had come from his state and fourteen times more Virginians had joined George McClellan!

Most Kentuckians' inclination to support the Union (or to support no one!) extended beyond their failure to supply sufficient Confederate troops. Buell and Grant prepared for combat inside southern safe harbors, for few Kentucky guerrillas bothered them as they swelled their resources. Instead, Louisville's bulging warehouses supplied Buell, and supplies for Grant in Paducah passed unhindered via the Ohio River, despite Kentucky slaveholders on the river's southern banks.

Moreover the St. Louis environs, in neighboring Border South Missouri, manufactured the supplement that landed forces most needed to conquer two rivers. Shipyards in the St. Louis vicinity crafted seven ironclads, draped in 2.5 inches of

armor, with steam driven paddles devised for shallow waters. Samuel Pook designed those brown river monsters, which looked like turtles. With Pook's Turtles, the northernmost South had given Union forces the missing ingredient to swoop down on the southernmost South.

Grant and his naval colleague, Andrew H. Foote, planned a coordinated land and water ambush of Fort Henry, sitting there vulnerably unfinished on the Tennessee River. Foote's

transports would deliver Grant's 15,000 troops close to the target, then pause while the infantry encircled the fort on the landed side. Subsequently, at the appointed hour on February 6, 1862, the navy would steam into position, and troops and turtles would simultaneously attack.

Left: General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, author of the "anaconda" plan (U.S. Army Military History Institute).



So much for circles on paper. On the soaking battlefield, Grant's troops missed the fun. Torrential rains messed up the timing, leaving the infantry slogging through mud, hours from its destination, at the predetermined moment for the coordinated surprise attack.

No matter. What the rains took away from mud clad infantrymen, the downpour awarded to ironclad vessels. The rising waters lifted Pook's Turtles over Confederate torpedoes and drowned out the lower half of Fort Henry. The brown river navy knocked out the fort's upper half in eighty minutes. What a triumph for triumph-starved Union newspaper readers, who cheered the tidings that Foote's ships steamed untouched all the way down to Alabama.

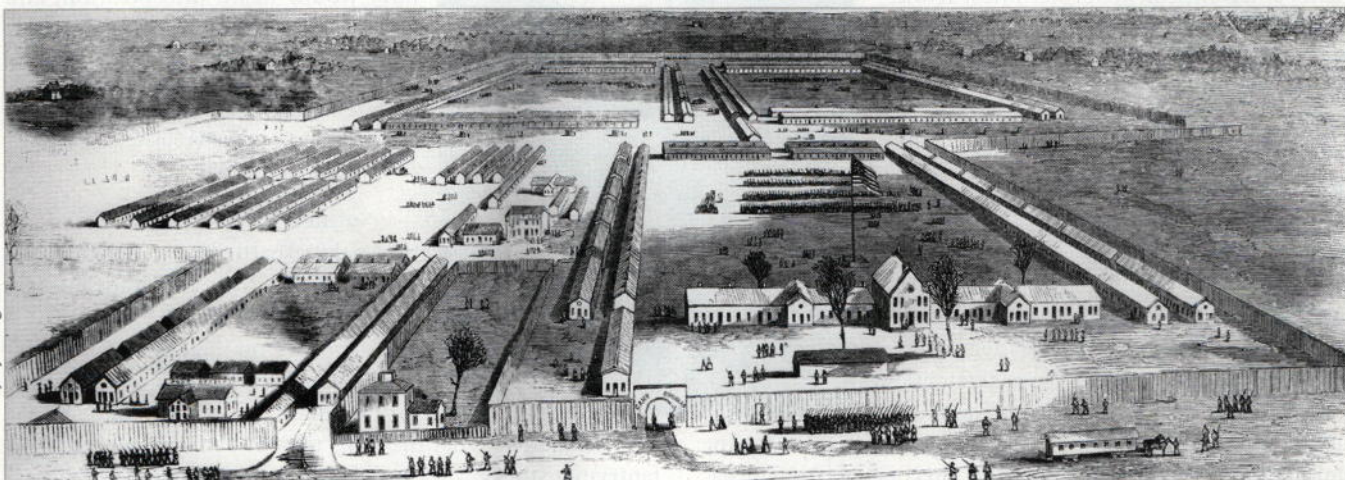
Triumph continued at Fort Donelson ten days later. This time the turtles missed the fun. After Andrew Foote's flotilla blundered too close to Confederate fire early in the three day Donelson campaign, the army had to reduce the fort by itself.

Again, no matter. Grant and Buell had been so well fortified during their four months of Kentucky sanctuary, and Kentuckians had so poorly fortified the rebels, that Confederates inside Fort Donelson feared the siege even though Buell, still up in Louisville, had not been summoned down to consolidate it. After a Confederate surprise charge failed to puncture the landed part of the siege, some 2,500 rebels escaped by water, and 700 cavalymen, under Nathan Bedford Forrest, sliced out on horseback. That left some 17,000 rebels to surrender unconditionally to the new hero with a new name, Unconditional Surrender Grant.

Neither the surrender of Fort Henry nor of Fort Donelson had transpired according to theoretical design. But both swift triumphs had given the anaconda design the initial practical articulation it needed. The Union's western force had secured a huge head start in snaking down to the Lower South. For that easy breakthrough, Border South attitudes had been most responsible. If Kentucky and Missouri had been rabidly Confederate, Grant would have had to fight for every inch below the Ohio River. Then the entire military story of Henry-Donelson would have been different—if there had been a story to tell.



"Suffering a successful siege, not mounting an unsuccessful charge, was the great Civil War killer." Above: Union soldiers occupy Fort Mahone after the successful conclusion of the siege of Petersburg.



Both Library of Congress

"The first thrust of the landed anaconda had swept up the upper two-thirds of the Mississippi Valley, after only ten days of battle and with under two thousand fatalities." Above: sprawling Camp Douglas was converted into a prison to accommodate the huge bag of Confederates captured at Forts Henry and Donelson.

PERRYVILLE, KENTUCKY

Perryville in fall 1862 ranked with Shiloh in the spring as the Confederacy's great attempt to reverse the Henry-Donelson disaster. If Grant and Buell had been swept back into Kentucky, the anaconda strategy would have suffered a grievous setback.

Confederate General Braxton Bragg delivered his first blow well, sprinting up into Kentucky ahead of Buell in August - September 1862. But then came an incredible maneuver, from a narrowly military point of view. Bragg veered off to Frankfort to inaugurate a Confederate governor of Kentucky on October 4, allowing Buell to catch up and save Louisville.

Four days later, Confederate and Union armies blundered into each other near Perryville. There they fought to a not-so-bloody (by Civil War standards) stalemate. Each side suffered under 5,000 casualties. Still, Bragg beat a hasty retreat from Kentucky. Why had a lackluster stalemate turned a promising Confederate countervasion into an abandoned campaign?

Because Buell had attempted a social rather than a military coup; and off the battlefield, he had suffered not a draw but a rout. The general had concurred with Jefferson Davis that Kentuckians would act like true blue Southerners, if the southern nation offered them the guns to be Confederate marksmen. So Bragg brought wagonloads of crated rifles to the most enslaved area of the Bluegrass. His colleague, General Kirby Smith, swarmed through Woodford County, fifty percent enslaved (a Lower South average). Bragg proclaimed to this rare widespread Border South plantation area that "I have entered

your state with the Confederate Army of the West and offer you the opportunity to free yourself from the tyranny of a despotic ruler."⁵ In place of Yankee despotic rule (and in place of his own rule of Louisville!), Bragg offered Kentuckians their very own Confederate governor, duly inaugurated. He thus handed fellow Southerners the chance to reverse the Border South gifts to the Union that had partially empowered Grant.

Bragg's was a failure of social, not military perception. Kentuckians yawned rather than rallied. Few came to Bragg's defense. The rifles largely remained in their packing cases, the packing cases largely remained in their wagons, and a Confederate army defeated not by Union guns but by Border South allegiances lumbered back to fight deeper in the South against Grant's enveloping anaconda.

Meanwhile, whenever Grant's soldiers marched close to southern slaves, black folk rallied to the Yankee. So too, when a Union army belatedly marched into eastern Tennessee, some 27,000 white folk joined the Union military machine. White Kentuckians had failed to hand such military dividends to Bragg. The Union's costly anaconda strategy needed such bonuses, to keep squeezing in on Lee.

CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga epic ranks as the most under appreciated of the critical Civil War stories. The tale looms crucial for two reasons. Here, the rebels came closest to stopping the strangling western anaconda. Here too, both sides' capacity to mount killing sieges came to excruciating test. As befits the underesti-

mated Chattanooga drama, the prelude to the main act featured the most under praised of Union campaigns and the most threatening of Union defeats.

Both the climb and the plunge of the Union's pre-Chattanooga roller coaster starred Union Major General William Starke Rosecrans, "Old Rosy" to his troops, whose rosy version of war featured the essence of anaconda/siege tactics. Rosecrans would push the defense back by moving around the rebels, not by charging through them. In his magnificent Tullahoma campaign of late June 1863, then again in his masterly first Chattanooga campaign of early September, Old Rosy drove Braxton Bragg clear out of Tennessee with feints and flanking movements, gaining over one hundred miles and losing fewer than one thousand men.

Braxton Bragg regrouped near Chickamauga Creek in northernmost Georgia, just south of Chattanooga. There Rosecrans' army, in an accident reminiscent of Perryville, happened upon Bragg's. There on September 19, the chess master of Tullahoma maneuvered his pieces once too often. The dense woods near Chickamauga made moving the pieces, indeed knowing which space contained pieces, neither art nor science but guess. Rosecrans, or rather a key intelligence officer, erroneously guessed that a fatal gap had opened in the Union lines. The misinformed general ordered troops to move over, filling the nonexistent gap. The movement opened a welcoming gap at just the spot where Confederate General James Longstreet (Old Rosy's former West Point roommate!) happened to be charging. The rebels accepted the invitation to enter, swarmed behind their unfriendly hosts, and provoked a frantic retreat. The befuddled Rosecrans and his army, accustomed to move every way but backward, ended up with their backs to the Tennessee River, near Chattanooga. Their plight showed that even a superb, well-equipped tactician of encirclement could temporarily fall victim to blinding trees and blasted luck on theory-defying battlefields.

Rosecrans' own fall proved longer than temporary. Soon removed from his command, he has rarely since received the deserved applause that Lady Luck muted. Whether the Union's atrocious fortune would become equally permanent now depended on whether rebels or federals possessed the better skill and resources to play the overwhelming Civil War game, the siege game.

The rebels, usually the besieged, had first chance to play besieger at Chattanooga. After the federal flight from Chickamauga, Braxton Bragg tried to trap the foe in the city. His siege ran atop Missionary Ridge on one side of Chattanooga's valley, atop Lookout Mountain on the other side, and across the valley to the Tennessee River. Inside the afflicted city, Union horses dropped, so it was said, like flies, and half-starved federal troops may well have eyed the carcasses.

But Union advantage off the battlefield, when expertly exploited militarily, made this killing siege all too easy to puncture. The Confederacy had too few troops to mount thick guards everywhere around the strangling circle. Bragg's siege ran especially thin near the river. Here, the Union's superiority in railroads and ships could probe a vulnerable target. The Union navy could rip holes in scantily manned river installations; and the Union's trains conveyed an amazing twenty thousand eastern reinforcements westward in an amazing 1233 miles in an amazing eleven days (all world records).

During the evening of October 28, the new western warriors, with the help of the Union's brown water navy, cracked inside the Chattanooga environs in under half an hour (beating the combat record at Fort Henry). The assaulters opened both a Cracker Line for trapped Union soldiers and a funnel

for tens of thousands of troops to come to the rescue. The rare rebel siege had ended. The usual federal advantage on western battlefields had been reestablished.

A northern cartoon ridicules the makeshift Confederate navy—Jefferson Davis prepares to launch a toy ship in a barrel. Without the overwhelming superiority of the Union navy, the anaconda plan could not have been implemented (*Library of Congress*).



Master Jeff—and his Navy.

Four weeks later, the demoralized rebels succumbed to another Civil War rarity, an all-conquering Union charge straight ahead, this time up Missionary Ridge. Demoralization had much to do with the unusual rebel flight from a charge, as did hatred of General Bragg and misplaced cannon and soldiers. But even in this unusual overwhelming Union victory without sieges, potential siege warfare contributed.⁶ Confederates atop Missionary Ridge suffered more than the sight of George Thomas' Union soldiers clawing up the ridge. Rebels could also see Joseph Hooker rolling into position, potentially blocking the southerly escape route from Chattanooga. From Missionary Ridge, rebels could further see that federals had the numbers in the valley to thicken any siege that Hooker might close. Societal advantage gave only the Union the manpower for successful siege warfare: That grim Chattanooga lesson pounded at the heels of the latest vanquished western rebels, as they slumped back toward another encirclement in Atlanta.

SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA

William Tecumseh Sherman's siege of Atlanta offered another classic example of how the Union's crushing numbers strangled the rebels. Confederate General Joseph Johnston, Sherman's first Atlanta adversary, always believed that the Yankee would lose "if he made...assaults on me."⁷ Johnston may have been right. When Sherman for once blundered into a headlong charge against protected Confederate riflemen at Kennesaw Mountain, he lost 3,000 men, compared to the rebels' but 600 casualties. Such five to one losses could swiftly dissipate Sherman's two to one numerical advantage. Instead, Sherman almost always used his superior numbers to tighten a siege around the city.

Johnston responded with incessant, begrudging retreat, of the very sort that Lee's critics say the master should have always deployed. Johnston's fate showed instead that the strategy of forever avoiding death by charging led to more deaths by strangulation. Jefferson Davis had to replace the excessively retreating Johnston with the excessively charging John B. Hood, who

ultimately had to charge just to escape westward with his men, before doomed Atlanta fell (September 1, 1864).

After Atlanta's collapse, Sherman made arguably the most remarkable battlefield decision of the war: *not* to chase after Hood to the west. Instead, Sherman sent George Thomas to tail the western rebel army and himself turned away from the adversary, to march east toward the Atlantic. Sherman's march to the sea in effect opened a third front, where the rebels had not been able to find adequate numbers for a second. Worse, the march to the sea depopulated the under populated Confederacy as never before. Sherman now sought to reduce not a rebel army (there was scarcely one in front of him) but the enemy home front. He would "make Georgia howl!"—make the *citizens* of Georgia howl.

The loudest howlers became the slaveholders, who lost fugitive slaves en masse. Not since the Union navy sailed up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, inviting slaves in the lower Mississippi's thick black belts to escape, had a Lower South region been so massively exposed to slave flight. (A central irony of the Civil War was that though the Lower South precipitated the war, the Upper South usually had to suffer the battles!) The fleeing slaves, hailing "Uncle Billy" Sherman as the Messiah, so engulfed their racist uncle (who would not allow a one of them in his army) that he arranged to give nonable bodied workers free farms, so they would not eat up military rations. As for able bodied black males, Uncle Billy used them as brute laborers, to help him traverse the soaking swamps. Armed with their grateful labor, he marched back from the sea in record time, having met and conquered scarcely an army. He instead had annihilated a social order.

The question is often asked, why didn't Confederates, after Appomattox, take to the hills and commence a guerilla war? After all, such irregular warfare has allowed many a losing society at regular warfare to outlast the winner. The question again reveals the misconception that this was a narrowly military war. One answer reveals the social advantage that so much brought the Union to battlefield triumph. If post-Appomattox rebels had sought to continue by slinking into the countryside, Uncle Billy would have been back in their largely uninvaded Lower South backyards, devastating their central social system. Slavery was not any old social system but one peculiarly susceptible to erosion by the very appearance of an invading army; and how Sherman's march did expose that nonmilitary weakness.

A comparison of Uncle Billy's nonbattlefield triumph in Georgia and Braxton Bragg's nonbattlefield loss in Kentucky highlights the limitations of a narrowly battlefield focus. Both invaders turned away from the opposing army, whether Hood's in the case of Sherman or Buell's in the case of Bragg. Each instead turned their attention on the invaded terrain's social allegiances, always white Kentuckians in the case of Bragg, sometimes black Georgians in the case of Sherman. Bragg suffered an almost total social loss, as scarcely a Kentuckian came to pluck a rifle out of the packing crates. Sherman enjoyed an almost total social victory, as many a slave swarmed toward a new life in freedom. With his new menial laborers' help, Sherman marched right toward finishing off Grant's anaconda.

With scarcely a new recruit to help, Bragg fell back toward suffering debacle at Chattanooga. Theirs was a brilliant demonstration that cultures as well as armies contested on these hal-
lowed grounds.

TOWARD THE NEXT ASSIGNMENT

Is our next assignment, then, to forget traditional military history and allow the New Social History to dominate narratives of war? No way! Unless nonmilitary factors can be shown to influence military engagements decisively, to repeat the iron law of social additions to battlefield analysis, the story will be as bloodlessly airy as the women's letters that allegedly turned around men's bloodletting. Social power becomes transformed into military might only when military chiefs spot the nonmilitary possibilities, then deploy the best battle strategy to exploit their advantage. Some soldiers never spot their opportunity,

which is one reason why the strongest side sometimes loses. Grant and Sherman did not always see the necessity for siege tactics, which is why their blunders killed too many chargers at Cold Harbor and Kennesaw Mountain.

The very impatient Grant was especially temperamentally unsuited to being one of history's great patient besiegers. Even his masterpiece, the

Vicksburg siege, came only after some comically false starts, including an impious attempt to make the Mississippi River flow as a mere mortal directed. Even Lee's long-feared bane, the Union's remorseless circle at Petersburg, closed only after Grant's many late-war deviations from encirclement, in and out of Virginia. Those deviations gave Grant, who ultimately won with sieges that avoided butchering his men, the ironic reputation of Civil War butcherer supreme.

Abraham Lincoln's long evasion of federally coerced emancipation made him an equally ironic Great Emancipator. Lincoln early believed that he would probably not win the war with just *northern* advantages. The huge southern terrain made conquest unlikely, if every Southerner fought for every inch of the fifteen slave states.

Lincoln first focused on Border South whites, in his obsession with transferring slave state resources to the Union's side of the balance sheet. "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game," he wrote at the moment the Blue Grass state gave sanctuary to the pre-Henry/Donelson Grant. "Kentucky gone, we cannot hold Missouri, nor as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the task on our hands is too large for us."⁹

Mainly because he feared that by liberating southern blacks, he would lose southern whites, Lincoln tried to avoid federally imposed emancipation until almost the last day of 1862.¹⁰ Not even the president's Preliminary Emancipation of September 22, 1862, promising a Final Emancipation Proclamation on the first day of the new year, settled the fate of coercive federal emancipation, in the president's mind. He still had one hundred days remaining in 1862 to convince rebels that they could save slavery by renouncing disunion. The president actively sought that renunciation by deploying special commissioners to three Confederate states in the late fall.

On September 22, Lincoln also had 100 days remaining to persuade Border South states to accept voluntary emancipation. That acceptance, he (erroneously) thought, would bring the erring Confederate brothers back. The president reasoned that Confederates must think, as he did, that if Border South states forever embraced free soil Union, the slave state nation could not endure. Lincoln's proposed federal constitutional amendment would have bribed Southerners with \$400.00 per slave to accept emancipation before 1900. The amendment would also have allowed ex-slave states to reestablish slavery, if they returned the money! As late as December 1, 1862, Lincoln still prayed that this constitutional amendment, seeking but not requiring a possibly temporary emancipation, would end the war before the Final Emancipation Proclamation had to be issued. His reluctance to play his January 1, 1863, trump card supplied a wonderful Civil War example that a potential social resource, such as southern slaves, becomes militarily relevant only after military chieftains have the vision to use it.



successful battle history can convey either military or nonmilitary complexity in a relatively few words.

Left: General Braxton Bragg (*Louisiana Office of State Parks*). Right: Major General William Tecumseh Sherman (*Smithsonian Institution, National Portrait Gallery*).

While Civil War buffs may begrudge the words subtracted from battle lore and donated to PCers' social concerns, the tradeoff can propel them past the New Social Historians. Amidst the New Social History's fascination with the bottom of the social heap, its practioners have slighted the view from the top; and the most powerful do impact on the historical process! Civil War buffs will never allow dead white males' central impact to be obscured. Still, if Civil War historians *both* fight to retain a central emphasis on the top—for example, on the battle sagas of white soldiers (and black troops too)—*and* if they add a central emphasis on the social order below—for example, on the

After the first day of the New Year, Lincoln saw blacks' military potential ultra clearly. Fearing that the Final Emancipation Proclamation would lose him southern whites, he went after compensating southern blacks with immense determination (thereby mocking still another Civil War misconception: that the Emancipation Proclamation freed no one).¹¹ Lincoln's aggressive use of the army to emancipate and enlist runaway slaves helped add still more slave state resources to the Union column (and without losing, as he had feared, Border South whites).

By enforcing the Final Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln later believed that he had given his costly siege/anaconda tactic the final huge asset it required. He was probably right, as he had probably been right that without white Border Southerners' assets, the gigantic Union task would have been too crushing for just northern hands. "Take from us, and give [back]

to the enemy," he wrote on August 17, 1864, "the hundred and thirty, forty, or fifty thousand colored persons now serving as soldiers, seamen, and laborers, and we cannot longer maintain the contest.... [We] would be as powerless to save the Union as to do any other impossible thing."¹²

The tale of how a partially blind president and his partially blind favorite general finally saw how to make devastating military use of their every social advantage is one of the great Civil War stories—and as militarily important as the advantages themselves. So too, the saga of how blindness and luck on the Chickamauga battlefield only temporarily delayed the strangulation of the Confederacy brilliantly illuminates how powerful the right Union vision and the right Union resources had become. Chattanooga provided the ultimate proof that Union social advantage had nourished a winning anaconda/siege strategy, a design unthinkable, unworkable without the skewed tides of population and industry. Those Union-sustaining social tides were as complicated as intricacies on the battlefields. No

contrasting proletariats in slave labor and free labor systems—they can point the way toward a reintegrated New American History.¹³ That synthesis has damagingly escaped the PCers. That cutting edge is what *North & South* should nudge all buffs to dare. □

WILLIAM W. FREEHLING, Singletary Professor of the Humanities at the University of Kentucky and winner of the Nevins, Bancroft and Owsley Prizes, is currently finishing up the second volume of his *Road to Disunion*. This article is adapted from his recent book *The South versus The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War*.

NOTES

1. With the exception noted below in note 6, all points in this article are discussed at greater length and extensively documented in my *The South versus The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York:

2001). Since my documentation is there available, I have kept notes here to a minimum.

2. See especially Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: 1992), pp. 171-99.
3. See, for example, Gallagher's *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge, MA: 1997). *The Confederate War* makes the best case that the battlefield, not the home front, determined Civil War verdicts.
4. Richard McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies: An Essay in Confederate Military History* (Chapel Hill: 1989).
5. Quoted in Freehling, *The South versus The South*, 60.
6. I wish I had seen this potential siege aspect of the rebel flight from Missionary Ridge chargers when I wrote *The South versus The South*, 155-61.
7. Quoted in *ibid.*, 161.
8. Quoted in *ibid.*, 163.
9. Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, in Roy C. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols (New Brunswick, NJ: 1953-55), IV, 531-32.
10. This interpretation is especially controversial. Documentation for the viewpoint can be found in *The South versus The South*, ch. 6.
11. See the sidebar in William C. Harris, "After the Emancipation Proclamations: Lincoln's Role in the Ending of Slavery," *North & South*, Vol. 5, #1 (December 2001). Harris estimates that the Proclamation freed as many as 20,000 slaves immediately.
12. Lincoln to Charles D. Robinson, August 17, 1864, in Basler, ed., *Lincoln's Works*, VII, 500.
13. For elaboration of this viewpoint, see my *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York: 1994).

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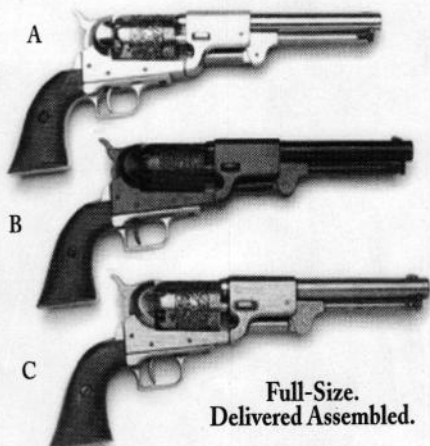
—Steven E. Woodworth, in *North & South*

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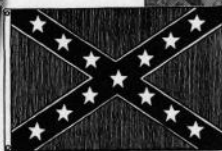


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Annual Conference

Following our successful program of battlefield tours in 2001, we are putting on three very special tours and a major conference in 2002. This first annual conference will be held the weekend of October 18-20 at the recently renovated Comfort Inn Conference Center in midtown Richmond. The theme will be the most fundamental question of all—"Could the Confederacy have won?"—and leading historians will give presentations and lead discussion groups on the politics of the Confederacy, its military effort, its economy, and the home front, and on how well the nascent nation mobilized its resources.

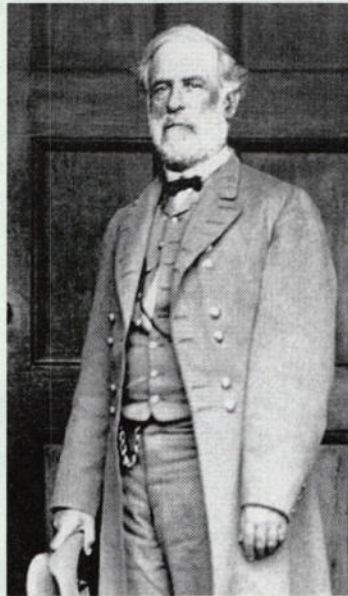
Taking part will be Gary Gallagher, John Simon, William Freehling, and John Clark; other names will be announced shortly. The conference will be the first major get together of society members for three years, and we anticipate an attendance of at least one hundred—a great opportunity to spend time with fellow buffs. There will be a side trip on Sunday to Pamplin Park Civil War Museum.

Battlefield Tours

NORTH ANNA/COLD HARBOR, May 24-26

This tour covers Grant's final attempt to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia in battle before accepting the inevitability of a long drawn out siege. The tour will be led by Gordon Rhea, whose knowledge of the battle is incomparable

(see article this issue) and who is—as participants in last year's Wilderness/Spotsylvania tour will testify—among the most pleasant battlefield guides one could hope to meet. The tour includes visits to many normally inaccessible sites on private land, as well as to the well preserved Confederate trench lines. Saturday will be spent touring the North Anna battlefield—including the position of



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Top: Generals Lee and Grant. Bottom: troops of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps digging in at Cold Harbor.

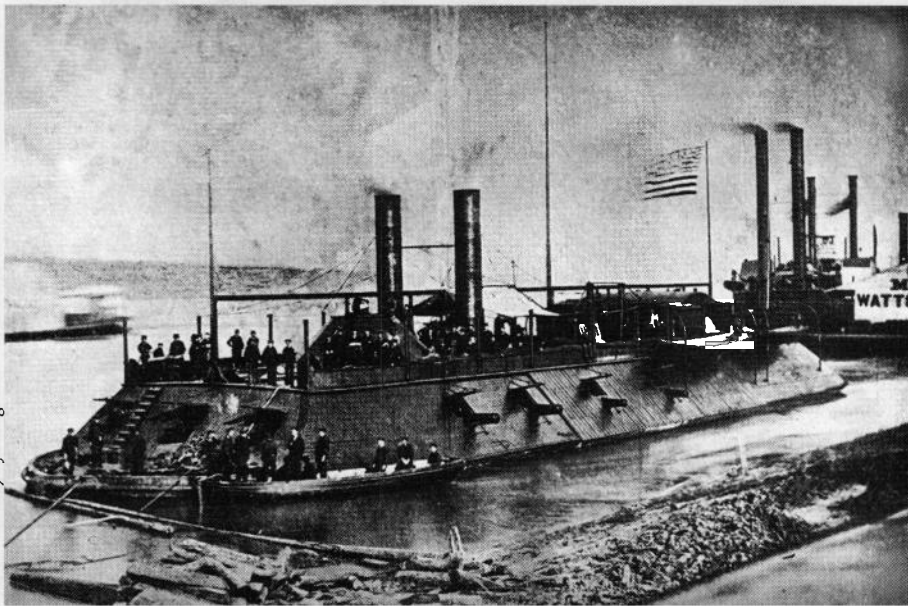
Lee's famous "inverted V", and Sunday will devoted to the ill-fated field at Cold Harbor.

Tour base: Comfort Inn Conference Center, Richmond.



Above: Union troops assault Confederate earthworks at Vicksburg.

Below: USS *Cairo*, first victim of a torpedo (mine).



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BRANDY STATION,

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Tour base: Holiday Inn, Culpeper.

VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN,

September 13-15

Grant's masterpiece, the campaign that split the Confederacy in two. Sites to be visited include Chickasaw Bayou, Grant's canal, the USS *Cairo* Museum, Champion Hill, Big Black River, and the battlefield park itself. Tour leaders park historian Terry Winschel and retired brigadier general Parker Hills. General Hills has conducted scores of staff rides for such groups as the Green Berets and US Marines. In 2001 he founded Battle Focus, which has the training mission of developing ethical and effective leaders and enhancing teamwork through on-the-ground battle and leader studies. Whether your interest is strategy or tactics, this promises to be an outstanding tour.

Tour base: Battlefield Inn, Vicksburg.

COST

The cost for each tour is the same: \$499 for Civil War Society members* (\$799 for nonmembers), \$449 if booked by March 15. Cost includes two days full board at hotel, and all entrance fees. (Nonresidential rates available.) Reserve your places (first come, first served) by calling (559) 855 8637.

* Annual membership \$39.95, includes 7-issue subscription to *North & South*. Existing subscribers simply add \$10.00 to become members of the Society.

Tactical Research

The recent request (*North & South*, Volume 4, #6) for readers to assist in researching infantry tactics—focusing on the impact of the rifle musket on the battlefield—generated a positive response, and project leader Richard Ruby has now contacted all those who expressed interest. We would like to hear from additional volunteers who are interested in extracting relevant material from regimental histories and Civil War memoirs.

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BECOMING JOSHUA LAWRENCE CHAMBERLAIN

He is one of the most popular heroes of the Civil War, but new sources reveal a very different man than the character portrayed in fiction and the beau ideal described in recent historical literature.

SOLDIERS ARE MADE, NOT BORN. Nothing in Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's life prior to the Civil War suggested that he would one day become known as "The Hero of Little Round Top," that he would earn a Medal of Honor, and that he would gain great fame and even celebrity with a following of devoted admirers in his own lifetime and in our own. Nothing that he achieved prior to the outbreak of the war seemed to prepare him for his moment of truth on the hillside at Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, when his quick thinking and iron determination enabled his regiment, the 20th Maine, to hold the left flank of the Army of the Potomac and throw back a fierce enemy assault. In fact, Chamberlain's life during the antebellum years took him about as far afield of military matters and battlefield heroism as a man could get.

He was born, the eldest of five children, in Brewer, Maine, on the morning of September 8, 1828.¹ His father, Joshua, was a farmer who worked a spare one hundred acres of land that he had acquired from his own father, also named Joshua. Chamberlain's mother, Sarah Dupee Brastow of Massachusetts, was a descendant of Huguenots who had escaped persecution in France by fleeing to Boston in 1685. They named their first son Lawrence for the American Navy hero of the War of 1812, Captain James Lawrence, the man who had told his men, "Don't Give Up the Ship," as he lay dying on the decks of the warship *Chesapeake*



Feted and honored in old age,
Chamberlain retains the posture of a soldier.
*Courtesy Pejepscot Historical Society,
Brunswick, Maine*

during a desperate battle with the British on Lake Eire in 1813.²

Lawrence Chamberlain's given name broke with the family custom of naming the eldest son Joshua, after the Old Testament warrior who had knocked down the walls of Jericho. It was, apparently, his father's idea to name him after the naval hero, but the decision to sever the family tradition seems to have made Chamberlain's mother nervous. As a result, she changed his name to Joshua Lawrence several years after his birth when, in an act of loyalty "to her husband's house," she set the boy's name down in the Brewster record books as the third Chamberlain named for the ancient ruler of Israel. Despite the change, the family—including his mother—continued to call him Lawrence.

Chamberlain's father tried to make a go of it as a farmer, but his tiny farm yielded small rewards. The elder Joshua was a good and honest man, a leading member of the community, and devoted to his family. In his later years, Joshua Lawrence fondly described his father as "a stalwart, earnest, thoughtful, inward-looking man," who seemed capable of accomplishing any task and doing so with "a deep vein of poetic imagination."³

Yet there was another side to his father that proved to be more difficult to reckon with. The elder Joshua often assumed a sober, strict, and even demanding mien. When it came to his children, and particularly to his sons (Joshua Lawrence had three younger brothers: Horace, John Calhoun, and Thomas), the father believed his place was not to instruct or guide, but to order them to fulfill their obligations, no matter how difficult.

Joshua Lawrence experienced his father's gruff tendency to command rather than instruct when, during one haying season during his youth, the boy inadvertently drove a wagon through a stream bed and got a wheel caught between two stumps. "Clear that wheel!" came his father's shout from behind. "How am I going to do it?" replied the boy. "Do it; that's how!" was the answer. Joshua Lawrence eventually freed the wheel on his own. He had come to know the meaning of orders and how to obey them.⁴

In his childhood, Joshua Lawrence did those things that most boys living on a working farm must do: he cleared woods, plowed grasslands into crop

fields, sowed and hoed the furrowed land, and harvested the crops. Looking back on his childhood through eyes that tended to sentimentalize his past, Chamberlain sang lilting prose songs of his days on the family farm and remembered the "glory of that summer's work": "One would gladly be alone in such a service, when a field that had been associated with many works of youthful years was to be sealed down under a sod for the long, eventful years to come. To a thoughtful spirit, sowing is a solemn, caring, trustful service. It is a communion with all forces of the Universe."⁵



Bowdoin College, circa 1850. *Courtesy Bowdoin College Archives.*

In later life, while writing his memoirs, Chamberlain mentioned incidents of family fun, such as witty anecdotes about his youngest brother ("mother's pet") and "pretended jealousies" and allusions to merry occasions with the family assembled before the fire in the kitchen where games would be played, songs sung, pantomimes acted out, and popcorn popped. But the overwhelming impression he left of his childhood was of the long hours he spent by himself.⁶ In his own words, he lacked "self-assurance" and "self-assertion." He preferred to be by himself because he suffered from a speech impediment that made him appear, in his own estimation, stupid and uninformed. The effect of his stammer caused a "sleepless anxiety" that wore down his self esteem. He became almost incurably bashful.

His father, who was not at all bashful, decided to do something about his son's retiring ways. When Joshua Lawrence was fourteen years old, his father enrolled him in a military academy in Ellsworth, about twenty-five miles from the Brewer farm.⁷ He stayed at Ellsworth's school for only a short time before his

family called him home. His father, who had been speculating in timber lands, lost nearly everything he owned. Both of Chamberlain's parents reacted to the financial disaster by falling apart—she became bed-ridden with a spinal disorder; the father soon suffered a similar paralysis. According to Chamberlain, his father "appeared at first to be utterly broken in courage and at a loss [as to] which way to turn."⁸

The son came to the rescue. At once, Joshua Lawrence found work to bring in some money. For a while, he did some land surveying and cleared a wood lot for

a neighbor. At a rope walk in Brewer, he hatched hemp and laid the mighty ropes and cables. He assisted a traveling medicine show by handing out liniment to buyers in the audience, and spent some time working in a brickyard. Then he turned his attention to the farm, and took on all the "planting, ploughing, sowing, hoeing, haying, harvesting, threshing, husking, shelling, housing the fodder, and cellaring the vegetables."⁹

Chamberlain also took on less physical labor, although the work was demanding nevertheless. In 1844, he began teaching school in a remote rural area. He did so despite the fact that with all his success in the military academy, all his effort to elevate his family out of the pits of financial disaster and despair, all his courage and strength that enabled him to take on strenuous jobs of various kinds, he still was not, as he recalled in his later years, "very self-assured [in] any way."

In the spring of 1846, at the age of eighteen, he returned home from his teaching assignments to the family farm in Brewer. His mood was buoyant and optimistic. Most of all, he reveled in the

opportunity to get back to nature, to shake off the cobwebs of the classroom and the dust of milltowns, and to smell and feel “the renovated earth.” Nevertheless, his parents—who had by now recovered from their maladies—wanted to know what he would make of himself and how he planned to support himself.

His father, on the one hand, favored the army and envisioned his son attending West Point. Chamberlain thought his father’s hopes for his future came from being impressed “by the examples and traditions cherished in his youth”—the same traditions that had led him to name his son after a hero of the War of 1812 in the first place—and because his father possessed “a chivalrous strain of blood in his composition.” His mother, on the other hand, could not accept the army as a “profession” and wished for her son to enter the ministry instead. She argued that the military seemed “narrowing and enervating.” In times of peace, the nobility of military service was lost; in wartime, it carried with it the obvious “unpleasant suggestions” of battle and death.



Harriet Beecher Stowe.
Chamberlain seems to have been more impressed with her hospitality than with her writing.

No one talked of his taking over the farm, or a portion of it, as his own. For all that Chamberlain had done to save his family’s farm, there was no living there for him. Doubtless he did not see himself as a farmer anyway, no matter how eloquently he waxed about nature and its

virtues. He would have to choose a profession for himself. The trouble was he had no particular interest in either the military or the ministry. He was not, as he explained in his later years, “much inclined to either course,” for they both offered “but little scope and freedom.” He felt that the lives of military officers and clergymen “bound a man by rule and precedents and petty despotisms, and swamped his personality.”¹⁰

He chose to postpone having to decide between the military or the ministry by declaring that he would attend Bowdoin College around the time of his nineteenth birthday, just slightly more than a year away. In the meantime, he worked diligently to prepare himself for entry into the college. He managed his time carefully by following a strict schedule that he kept pinned to his bookcase door. In the garret, he fixed up a study where he found “perfect seclusion and self-command,” two things that he valued very highly. He shut himself off in his room for long hours and practiced Greek from dawn until midnight. Occasionally his father would come up to the garret and the two of them would practice broadsword fencing.

Finally, in February 1848, his sponsor, William L. Hyde (Bowdoin, Class of 1842), drove Chamberlain south in a sleigh through miles of endless snow to Brunswick, a small lumbering and mill town near the northern reaches of Casco Bay, for his entrance examinations into Bowdoin. Chamberlain impressed the examining board and passed with something called “advanced standing” that would allow him to matriculate with the current freshman class. He was told to begin his formal studies at six o’clock on the following morning. His career at Bowdoin had begun.

Chamberlain spent his first day at college, like most freshmen, in utter confusion, but things soon settled down for him. He endured some minor hazing and ardently applied himself to his studies. Though surrounded by the communities of the college and the town, Chamberlain described himself once more as being on his own “to face those fields where one must sow in tears that he may reap in joy; where ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and life for life must be given, so that life may be unto life.” It was both a stern and a lofty metaphor for his isolated life at Bowdoin.

Not only did studying consume him. For his first two years at Bowdoin, he kept a Sunday school at a church two miles down the Bath road. He also taught school during winter vacations to “mostly grown-up sailor boys and mill men behind in studies but forward in manners.” He did little socializing, kept mostly to himself, and worked hard at overcoming his speech impediment, which he finally conquered by using the technique of pretending he was about to sing instead of speak when a word beginning with a hard consonant threatened to trip him up. By his own measure, he led a spartan existence, occasionally working in the library as an assistant, attending dinners at the homes of professors, or going to church.¹¹

In his second year Chamberlain made some friends, who called him “Jack,” but he refused to drink even a glass of cider, and seems to have been something of a prude, a straight-and-narrow fellow who got on his friends’ nerves more than once. He continued to distance himself from his college chums, and they, in turn, would keep secrets from him or refrain from telling certain stories in his presence. No doubt he was less popular than he thought. Chamberlain did, however, win the respect of his friends when he was called to the president’s office and ordered to reveal the names of some boys who had raised hell during an arbor celebration. He decided to refuse on principle, informed the president that what was being asked of him was dishonorable, and walked out of the office fully prepared to take whatever punishment might come. In the end, his friends voluntarily turned themselves in so that Chamberlain would not be unduly disciplined.

When his first two years were finished, he gratefully went home to Brewer for a three-week vacation. Just when everything seemed to be going so well, tragedy struck Chamberlain and sabotaged his studies. Sometime after his twenty-first birthday, he fell ill with fever and spent the next nine months laid up at home. (There was a disturbing pattern to illnesses in the Chamberlain family, which laid parents and children low in times of extreme stress.) His mother and sister Sarah (called Sae) cared for him and got him back on his feet. When he was ready to return to Bowdoin, however, he had missed his entire junior year, and

was forced to take his third year of studies with an entirely different class, the Class of 1852.

He quickly got back into the grind of studying, however, and his junior year was spent mostly with his head in his books. During his senior year, however, he enjoyed a number of "distractions," as he called them, that took his mind off studying and gave him something to do besides school work. At the First Parish Church, he became "conductor" of the church choir and an occasional organist. At the college, he joined a literary society called the Round Table that met every fortnight to read and discuss original papers on various topics.¹²

His fondest distraction of all was the "Saturday Evenings" club he attended at the home of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of the prominent minister Lyman Beecher and the wife of Calvin Stowe, a portly professor of theology at the college. During the long winter nights of howling winds and drifting snows in Brunswick, Hattie Stowe, who had a flair for words, worked on her literary pieces. In response to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which empowered the federal government to assist in the return of runaway slaves to their rightful owners, she began writing a novel that she hoped would reveal once and for all the evils of slavery. By April 1851, she had finished the first chapter of a serialized novel called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

On Saturday evenings at the Stowe house, Chamberlain and the assembled multitudes—students, faculty, friends of the family—heard Mrs. Stowe read chapters aloud from her novel, which she completed in the spring of 1852. The book seems not to have impressed Chamberlain very much. Hattie Stowe wanted her work to make every American feel a personal guilt for slavery's inhumanity. What struck Chamberlain instead—and what stayed with him for years to come—was Mrs. Stowe's "sweetness of . . . spirit, and her charming hospitalities."¹³

Spending those Saturday evenings at the Stowe house at least seems to have released Chamberlain from his self-imprisonment. For the rest of his senior year, his social engagements increased and he found himself more fully involved in the life of the college and its intellectual community. There was another reason for coming out of his shell: he was

falling in love with Frances Caroline Adams, the minister's daughter.

On Sundays, as he conducted the choir or played the organ, Chamberlain could look out and see the plain face of Frances Adams, the adopted daughter of the Reverend Dr. George E. Adams. For reasons that are not quite evident, her biological parents gave her up to the Reverend Adams, a relative, and his wife, who were themselves childless. Frances' new parents adored her and she came to think of them as a father and mother, although she did stay in touch with her natural parents and even visited them occasionally.¹⁴

Little is known about how Chamberlain and Fanny began their relationship. But what is clear from the mountain of letters that they wrote back and forth to one another is that this was no romance made in heaven. From a modern perspective it is difficult to know what they were feeling and what they were really trying to say to one another. What they wrote, back and forth, sometimes over and over, reveals all too painfully that no matter how hard they tried, no matter how earnestly and honestly they sought to express themselves, they succeeded only in communicating at cross purposes.

At first, Fanny Adams seemed to cling to Chamberlain as if he were a life raft. In February 1850, her adopted mother, Sarah Folsom Adams, died, and the household that lived in the First Parish parsonage on Maine Street discovered that its anchor was gone. Fanny had barely adjusted to the loss when the Reverend Adams, after attending a conference in Chicago, announced that he was engaged to marry Helen M. Root, the sister of the noted musician, George F. Root (who a decade later would compose such songs as "The Battle Cry of Freedom" and "Just Before the Battle, Mother"). Miss Root was only six months older than Fanny. On December 30, 1851, the devout Reverend Adams and the young Miss Root were married in a ceremony that Fanny attended as a witness.¹⁵

Two days later, Fanny professed her undying love for Chamberlain in a letter that ran thick with syrupy effusions intended to assuage her lover's doubts about her feelings: "How could you think that I would shrink from you ever! you who seem so holy, so pure and noble to me. . . . I would be everything to you; I would nestle closely in your arms forever, and love you and cling to you and be your

'bird': dear, precious heart!" Despite such professions of love, which were very real and sincere, Fanny also had her doubts about Chamberlain and her feelings for him. It seemed like she wanted to love him, wanted even to throw herself at him, hoping that he could be someone who would take care of her and would not abandon her; yet her own fear of making a commitment, of risking the chance of such an abandonment, held her back.¹⁶ Her ambivalence toward him was something that would define their relationship for the rest of their lives.

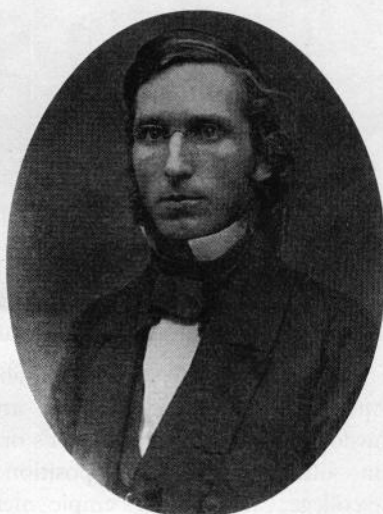


Frances ("Fanny") Caroline Adams Chamberlain.

For his part, Chamberlain had fallen in love with love more than he had with Fanny. A strong romantic streak, and a Byronic tendency to blurt out his passions as words spoken on a stage or a death bed, gave an overblown quality to his private expressions of desire. What he loved was the idea of having someone he could be devoted to, not the woman whom Fanny actually was. "Fanny, dear Fanny," he would plead with her, "only tell me that you do love me as I *do* love you."¹⁷ In letter after letter, his pleas for eternal expressions of her devotion to him, coupled with an overbearing neediness, made it appear like he never received—or read—any of Fanny's replies, for nearly every new letter sounded the same note and asked for all the same reassurances. Fanny professed her love over and over again, but he could not overcome his own fear that she cared less for him than he did for her. "This anxiety and imagining," she told him bluntly, "*wears me out.*"¹⁸

In the winter of 1852, Fanny went off to New York for an extended stay to

study music with her new uncle by marriage, Professor Root, and her absence from Brunswick made Chamberlain pine for her from morning till night. He sent her flowers and wrote her letter after letter in which he poured out his misery. "How sad you have been for me," she remarked in one reply, "and I not near to soothe and comfort you when you were ill!" His neediness and insecurity, however, became readily apparent to her, and she found it difficult to see his ardor in a positive light. Even from a distance, he was smothering her with his love.¹⁹



Professor Joshua L. Chamberlain,
pictured in 1859.

Chamberlain's colleagues told the governor that he was no more than a mild mannered professor, and "had no military stuff in him."

Meanwhile, Fanny's father disapproved of her relationship with Chamberlain, and he let both of them know it. Even after the couple announced in late spring that they were engaged to be married, the Reverend Adams opposed their romance and union, saying that he did not think much would come of it or that it would really last very long. Chamberlain tried to brush the pastor's opposition aside, but it remained as one more obstacle in the couple's path. He hoped that such storms would strengthen their affection for one another and "bind us closer." They didn't. Fanny became increasingly aware that her relationship with Chamberlain was influenced by the tangled knot of feelings she had for her father.²⁰

Despite all the distractions (love and otherwise) that Chamberlain experienced in his senior year at Bowdoin, he

did not let his academic standing slide. When the school term drew to an end, Chamberlain took satisfaction in knowing that he had earned honors in every department at Bowdoin, including mathematics, his weakest subject. As a reward for his outstanding scholarly achievement, he was asked to deliver the First Class Oration at commencement. At the graduation exercises, which were celebrating the college's fiftieth anniversary, he started out in good form but faltered when he noticed several dignitaries in the crowd (the Bowdoin luminaries—Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Franklin Pierce—were all there). His speech turned into a disaster. He uttered practically meaningless phrases and an extemporaneous conclusion, exiting the platform as rapidly as he could.²¹

After recovering from the embarrassment of his performance, Chamberlain faced the necessity of deciding between the inescapable choices that had been earlier presented to him by his parents: on one hand, West Point; on the other, the ministry. After weighing the issue, he chose the ministry and made plans to attend the Bangor Theological Seminary.²² But his choice was determined not only by his desire to please his mother. There were deeper, spiritual reasons that lay behind his decision. He had always taken Christianity and his own faith seriously. Raised in a household where the doctrines of Puritan and Huguenot Calvinism flowed together, his religious upbringing stressed that "integrity and honor [were] the law; good work, good will, good cheer, the rule." Before entering college, he had been accepted into the Brewer First Congregational Church, although he had not gone through a "conversion experience" like others in the church had done during the religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening.

As the years passed, and he put more thought into his piety, Chamberlain veered more and more toward a kind of Christian transcendentalism, not unlike the beliefs that sustained Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Ellery Channing, and Theodore Parker. He did not go so far as to challenge the divinity of Christ, as some Unitarians did, but he did embrace the transcendentalist notion that the individual was the spiritual center of the universe and that happiness depended on self-realization. In this sense, Cham-

berlain was not only a romantic, as he demonstrated in his love letters to Fanny, but a Romantic who had come to accept the principles of European Romanticism, a movement centered in Germany that glorified nature and individualism and heroism.

Chamberlain's own commentary on how he came to choose the roads he would follow in life affirmed the transcendental character of his beliefs: "He must [he wrote about himself in the third person] look away from the confusions and beguilements of beginnings to the consummate while unto whose needs and masteries these things were preconfigured; he must rise to the heights of life,—which means, in truth, to withdraw within the consciousness of nature's true nobility, the supremacy of the spiritual over the material, and hence the transmutation of the material into the spiritual, which is the mystery and glory of life, the redemption of flesh through spirit,—of body through soul." In this way, he said, one can then "set his compass and fix his resolve."²³

So Chamberlain went off to seminary in October 1852. He and Fanny agreed to put off their marriage for the three years it would take him to complete his studies. Once enrolled, he immediately immersed himself in his work and tried not to think too much about her. He was appointed one of the speakers at an exhibition of the seminary's Rhetorical Society and, to fulfill the honor, he gave a lecture on "The Melancholy of Genius."

Melancholy was a word much on his mind as he pored over his theological readings. He tried to be positive about his separation from Fanny, telling her that the three years would go by "like a flash" and after the time had elapsed that "we shall come home forever." But Fanny was having doubts again. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that her mood swings were unusual or purposely designed to keep Chamberlain off-balance. Actually their courtship, with all its ups and downs, certainties and doubts, and prolonged delays before marriage, followed the typical course of prenuptial conventions of the time. Courtship was a game played between males and females, and the game commonly consisted of one party or the other being coy or flirtatious, using double entendre to mask sexual desires, and playing hard to get.²⁴

Before the end of 1852, Fanny—who seemed unable to shake off her ambivalence toward Chamberlain—accepted a teaching position at a girls' school in Milledgeville, Georgia. She found Georgia dismal and cold, but she did become extremely fond of the South, its people, and its way of life. More than anything, she liked her new-found independence. Like other women, Fanny was trying to break free of the bounds dictated by the cult of true womanhood and the ideal of domesticity that limited the sphere of women during the mid-nineteenth century. Although she was by no means a radical feminist, working politically and socially as other women were doing for equal rights and suffrage, she clearly defined herself in ways that differed greatly from the roles played in the home by her own mothers—natural and adoptive—and by most of the women she knew in Brunswick.²⁵

When it came to thinking about marriage from her vantage point deep in the heartland of the South, where the notion of female purity defined the ideal of Southern womanhood and men held white women on a pedestal, Fanny began to worry about the sexual obligations and the burdens of childbearing that were expected of every married woman. She informed Chamberlain that she wanted only a platonic marriage, given the fact that “children are the result of a tyrannical cruel abuse and prostitution of women.” Chamberlain could not believe her words and begged her to reconsider her position. “I do not like to contemplate you as a fossil remain,” he wrote. A year later she relented, but obviously she would have preferred to set forth a marriage contract that differed from the one Chamberlain had in mind.

After rejecting Fanny's suggestion that he move south and find work there, and after she rejected his suggestion that she move back north, Chamberlain's despair over his relationship with her worsened, and he became depressed. “The sky is all overcast,” he wrote Fanny, “and the rain is rushing down, and the wind is sighing and moaning, and my heart is overspread with loneliness and gloom.” Throughout his life (except during the war years), these bouts with depression would recur and each time would make the world into a very dark place. In his relationship with Fanny, his depression only tended to make their

courtship even more complicated than it already was.

There were also vague hints in his letters that his despondency had caused him to be unkind to Fanny in some way—perhaps by berating her or denigrating what he considered to be her nasty habits—and though he promised repeatedly to change his ways, he seems to have persisted in following the same injurious patterns of behavior. In one letter, he fiercely scolded her for failing to write to him for a period of three weeks. She, in turn, questioned why he did not write her more regularly and complained that even when she did receive his letters they seemed to take forever to reach her in Milledgeville.

Chamberlain's angry streak troubled her and kept her feeling uneasy about him. She once told him she was constantly fearful that she might “wound” him in some way without meaning to. It did not help matters much when an acquaintance told her that Chamberlain's temperament “would be a great source of distress to me through life” and that it would be impossible to avoid arousing his ire inadvertently. But she did not put all the blame on him for the rough ride their relationship had turned out to be. Occasionally suffering from bouts of depression herself, she wondered if their troubles might actually be her fault. For all the pure affection they felt for one another, they utterly failed to communicate their feelings in a straightforward manner. Love, which is never easy, had run into the rocky shoals of misunderstanding, poor communication, crossed purposes, and each partner's protracted—and unsuccessful—search for self.²⁶

In his final year at the seminary, Chamberlain wrote four required sermons, which he preached in different parishes. As a result, he received three or four invitations to serve as a pastor in churches, but he turned down the offers. He graduated from the seminary late in the summer of 1855, and a week later he accepted a master's degree from Bowdoin (on the basis of his coursework at the seminary) by delivering an oration on “Law and Liberty” at the Bowdoin commencement. This time, unlike his undergraduate speech, his delivery was polished and professional; the oration was very well received by the audience and in the local press. In the crowd, listening to

his every word, was Fanny, who had finally agreed to end her Southern sojourn (her “exile,” as she called it) and return to his arms.



Chamberlain as a lieutenant colonel, 1862.

Even though he made a favorable impression with his speech, and Bowdoin—a day after his master's oration—offered him a teaching position at the college, Chamberlain's employment prospects were severely limited, and he had to negotiate strenuously to get the Bowdoin offer in the first place. Displeased with his salary, Chamberlain put off the wedding, an ironic twist that showed his male concern for being unable to support a wife more than it did any change of heart about Fanny. She stormed at him for delaying the marriage, and finally he agreed to marry her as soon as the first term at Bowdoin ended. The Reverend Adams, who had a keen eye, noted how miserable Fanny and Chamberlain both appeared. On December 7, 1855, at 4:30 in the afternoon, they were married in the First Parish Church. No one seemed particularly ecstatic. “I feel sadly about poor Fanny,” wrote Adams. He feared “she will not make herself happy.”²⁷

The couple, from all appearances, were happy enough at first, but not care-free. Living in rented rooms, Chamberlain worried about money and his career. When Fanny went away to visit family or friends in other places, his insecurities and loneliness would surface again, and he would write her aching letters longing for her return home, fearful ones propounding her desertion of him, or jealous

Alice Rains Trulock and James A. Trulock

ous ones accusing her of infidelities. Meanwhile, he taught long and hard at Bowdoin. If he had regrets about choosing a scholar's life, he did not say so openly. In August 1856, he was appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. The promotion came just in time. In the golden days of Indian summer in 1856, Fanny gave birth to a baby girl, whom they named Grace Dupee, but called Daisy. Chamberlain hoped that the baby would help usher in a new life "for all in that house."²⁸

and impending civil war seem not to have enshrouded Joshua L. Chamberlain much at all. He cared little about politics—or at least he didn't talk about political matters in his surviving correspondence—and took even less note of such pressing national issues as slavery, abolitionism, sectional discord, or constitutional acrimony. In this regard, Chamberlain was a strange transcendentalist. Unlike so many of his brethren who looked to the glorification of consciousness and will, he rejected the idea of so-

Even though he felt "an irresistible impulse . . . to have a hand in this business," he did not dash off to enlist in the spring of 1861.³¹

One reason for his hesitation may have resulted from the fact that his father had come out against the war. How vigorously the father presented his views to his son cannot be known. Some later accounts called Chamberlain's father a Democrat, which probably was the case, but whatever political party he belonged to he believed, at the very least, that the



Battle scene from *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* by Edwin B. Coddington (1968).

The countercharge on Little Round Top was the defining moment of Chamberlain's life.

Becoming parents did not solve the problems in the Chamberlains' relationship. Within a few short years after their marriage, they experienced some terrible losses, all of which kept their emotional lives on edge and in turmoil. A year after Daisy was born, Fanny was pregnant again and gave birth prematurely to a boy, but the infant lived only a few hours. A healthy son, whom they named Harold Wyllys, arrived about a year later, which brought joy to their hearts. But their emotional ups and downs continued when a baby girl, Emily Stelle, died in September 1860, leaving, as Chamberlain said, "but a summer smile and aching hearts, as she departed with the flowers." That same year, Fanny's natural father, Ashur Adams, and a brother, George Wyllys Adams, both died. In 1861, Chamberlain's brother, Horace, died of lung disease at the age of twenty-seven on the couple's wedding anniversary.²⁹

If coming events cast their shadows before them, as poets and prophets think they do, then the shadows of secession

cial reform and felt no burning compulsion to change the world around him. Fanny expressed no great concern over the impending crisis. In fact, she failed to see why slavery—which she considered a benign institution—was dividing the nation.³⁰ The Chamberlain household conspicuously lacked any overt display of social conscience.

In his autobiography, Chamberlain wrote that the mighty events leading up to the Civil War "took possession of every heart" and pushed everything else in his own life aside, including his personal woes. Yet, for all his apparent patriotic fervor, he did not go rushing to the flag when Lincoln was elected or when the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter. He declared that the "flag of the Nation had been insulted" and that the "honor and authority of the Union had been defied" by the secessionists who had aimed their guns at Sumter. "The country," he said, "was roused to the peril and duty of the hour." But he was not similarly "roused"—not personally, anyway.

conflict was "not *our war*," as he phrased it in a letter to Joshua Lawrence. Nor did Fanny, understandably, want her husband to go to war. His employment at Bowdoin earned them a comfortable living, the children needed him, and, like most wives in wartime, she had no desire to risk becoming a widow if the worst should happen on the battlefield.³²

Despite these hindrances, Chamberlain eventually decided to join the war, and he seems to have planned fairly carefully how to achieve his ends—most likely without consulting Fanny. His biggest obstacle was his position at Bowdoin, where he knew he could not obtain a release from his teaching duties to saunter off with the army. At the college, President Woods expressed an opposition to the war as fiercely as Chamberlain's father had done, and the faculty pretty much resented losing students to the army, not to mention fellow professors. So Chamberlain began arranging things in such a way that he could use deception to get what he wanted—not, by any

means, the most honorable course to follow, but it did prove to be an effective way to extricate himself from his trap in Brunswick.

The college unwittingly played into his plan. The previous year he had been given a new assignment and a lifetime professorial chair in the Department of Modern Languages. With the appointment came the promise of a two-year leave of absence that Chamberlain had contemplated using to travel abroad in Europe, with all of his expenses to be paid by the college. By the summer of 1862, however, he had changed his mind. The reversals of the Union army on one battlefield after another convinced him, as he said many years later, that he belonged among the Union's fighting forces.

Chamberlain saw the war as an opportunity to test and prove himself. War was mostly honor and chivalry, in his estimation. As he wrote years later: "Fighting and destruction are terrible; but are sometimes agencies of heavenly rather than hellish powers. In the privations and sufferings endured as well as in the strenuous action of battle, some of the highest qualities of manhood are called forth,—courage, self-command, sacrifice of self for the sake of something held higher,—wherein we take it chivalry finds its value." All war, he said, "is for the participants a test of character; it makes bad men worse and good men better." Chamberlain perceived himself to be a knight errant about to embark on a glorious crusade.³³

He put things in motion by offering his services to Governor Israel Washburn, Jr., of Maine. In mid-July 1862, Chamberlain followed up with a formal letter asking for a field officer's commission, promising he could fill a regiment with an overflowing tide of students, and indicating that he could free himself from Bowdoin in August. Everything did not go smoothly. The press learned of Chamberlain's negotiations with the governor and announced that the professor had been offered a colonelcy. Embarrassed by the leak and the inaccuracy, Chamberlain apologized to the governor. But now the story was out. Everyone, including his colleagues at Bowdoin, knew what Chamberlain was up to.³⁴

Opposition to Chamberlain's enlistment in the army began to surface almost immediately. The Attorney General of Maine wrote privately to the governor

that Chamberlain was not good officer material. More damning was the howl sounded by members of the Bowdoin faculty, who, somewhat justifiably under the circumstances, felt that their colleague had been duplicitous. The professors remonstrated with the governor, portrayed Chamberlain as nothing more than a mild-mannered professor, and argued that Chamberlain "had no military stuff in him."

Chamberlain wanted to believe that bitter infighting among faculty members—each side wanting to get its grip on his endowed chair—was behind the college's extreme response to his military plans, but it seems more likely that his colleagues quite simply felt betrayed and angry. For one of the first times in his life, Chamberlain had not acted according to

though, his academic colleagues gave up their effort to block his commission. They had little choice, of course, for Chamberlain had won his first military victory by having outflanked his enemy.³⁵

Suddenly he was full of energy. He seemed, in fact, like an entirely new man. Three days after receiving his commission, he went back to Augusta, perhaps to confer in person once more with the governor, perhaps to make sure his opponents would not block his path at the State House. Then he lunged into recruiting men for the 20th, a job made less difficult by the fact that volunteers had poured forth in response to Lincoln's call for 300,000 troops that summer. The governor designated Camp Mason in Portland on the sparkling Casco Bay as the 20th's rendezvous point.



Reunion of the 20th Maine, Gettysburg, 1889.

Courtesy Theodore S. Johnson

Hoyle, and while it would be unfair to imply that his scheming was dishonorable, one must at least accept the truth that his tactics could hardly be considered above board, either.

After the unexpected public reaction to his negotiations with the governor, Chamberlain withdrew his request for a regiment all his own and told Washburn that he would settle for "a subordinate position." On August 8, 1862, Governor Washburn named Adelbert Ames, a regular Army officer, as colonel and Joshua Chamberlain as lieutenant colonel of the 20th Maine Regiment, the last of five regiments being raised that summer for three-year enlistments. Chamberlain accepted the commission enthusiastically, although he did point out to the governor that he was still under fire from his fellow Bowdoin professors. In time,

Being a soldier agreed with Chamberlain. He found not only a new energy in his life, but a new purpose. On August 18, Chamberlain arrived at Camp Mason and assumed responsibility for keeping the recruits together and out of trouble until Colonel Ames, who was detained in Virginia, could take over.³⁶ It was a motley assemblage of men and boys. They came from all walks of life, but mostly they were laborers who knew how to put in a good day's work—farmers, lumbermen, fishermen, sailors, with a small assortment of merchants and clerks (and at least ten Bowdoin graduates). There was no discipline, and Chamberlain was at a loss as to how to get some and enforce it.³⁷

The disorder melted away when Adelbert Ames showed up one evening, probably on August 24 or 25, to take up

his command. A regular army officer who had graduated fifth in his class from West Point in May 1861, Ames had already distinguished himself on the field of battle at Bull Run, where he had been badly wounded. Within days he had worked wonders, put the men in uniform, distributed company books, obtained the officers' commissions from Augusta, and circulated manuals on tactics and army regulations around the camp.

Chamberlain and Ames hit it off right from the very beginning. Practically nothing is known about their interaction during those arduous days after Ames' arrival at Camp Mason, but the two men must have gotten right down to working together; in a short time, it became clear that they genuinely liked one another. Chamberlain, who was a good judge of character, saw that Ames could teach him what he needed to know. At Camp Mason, Chamberlain appropriately occupied the background as Ames asserted his command and organized the men.³⁸

On August 30, the regiment of 939 officers and men was ordered to move out, but when night fell, the 20th was still at Camp Mason, and everyone—including Fanny and the Reverend Adams, who had come to see Chamberlain off—found themselves trying to keep dry under soggy canvas tents that snapped and fluttered in a cold wind-and-rain storm. Throughout the night, thunder boomed and lightning bolts flashed through the sky over the muddy grounds of Camp Mason, a portent of sights and sounds to come. The inclement weather kept the 20th Maine in Portland for several more days.

Early on the morning of September 2, the 20th Maine finally struck its tents, loaded its gear, and marched off to the train depot. Down streets lined with tall elm trees, the Reverend Adams walked with the soldiers; Fanny rode in a carriage. At the station, goodbyes were said, tears were shed, and the men were loaded into the cars. Chamberlain's father could not be there to wish him well, so he sent an odd letter pointing out—with a bit of antiwar pomposity—that the war might not be as noble a cause as Joshua Lawrence considered it to be, but urging him, nevertheless, to take care of his brother Tom (who had also enlisted in the regiment) and to "come home with honor."

By three o'clock that afternoon, the 20th Maine regiment had arrived in Bos-

ton and marched past waving and cheering pedestrians down to the old wharves, where the men were directed on board the steamer *Merrimac*, bound for the seat of war. At 5:00 a.m., under the brightening sky, the steamer slipped across the silken harbor and steered its course for Washington, D.C.³⁹

Chamberlain felt the momentousness of the occasion. In an earnest letter home that he wrote to Fanny while sailing south on the *Merrimac*, he thanked her for "the force of your noble self-sacrifice, your heroism greater than mine, [and for] inspiring my soul." Like many other soldiers, he transformed his quest for adventure into a sacrifice made for wife and family. "I shall be calm and brave *for you*," he told Fanny, and he insisted that his actions sprang from duty and honor.

In later years, he marveled at how well he had done in becoming a soldier so quickly. He had to call on all his "in-born aptitudes"—including self-discipline and a "habit of sustained attention"—to become an army officer as rapidly as events had necessitated.⁴⁰ Behind him, far beyond the smooth ocean waters, over the now invisible landmarks of Boston's Old North End, and down the many winding roads that would one day carry him back to Maine, he left his wife, his children, and his Bowdoin colleagues to find their own transcendental happiness in whatever fashion might suit them. He was off to find his own.

War changes men. In Chamberlain's case, his transformation into a soldier—and, less than a year later on the fields of Gettysburg, into a warrior—appeared to take place almost instantaneously. Army life, as his letters and remarkable accomplishments in uniform reveal, not only appealed to him, he seemed in fact to thrive on it. But he was not really a "killer angel," as the author Michael Shaara portrayed him in his Pulitzer Prize winning novel. Chamberlain never really seemed to have the killer instinct in him. Instead, he was a golden knight, a gentleman soldier, a genteel and humane commander. The changes he had experienced in the short time between his decision to join the army and the 20th Maine's orders to leave Portland demonstrated that he had found in the soldier's life a new persona, one that suited him far more comfortably than the roles of troubled husband, reluctant scholar, and unhappy professor.

Soldiering seemed to be good for him, changing him for the better, bringing out his best qualities, making him feel more alive than he had ever felt before. When the war was over and he tried to return to his life with Fanny (and their relationship continued to disintegrate), when he turned to a political career in hopes of finding a new source of satisfaction (and learned that politics was not his forte), when he attempted to lead Bowdoin as its president (with mixed results), when he sought to become an entrepreneur and a speculator (and failed miserably)—in all of these postwar endeavors he discovered—sadly and tragically—that nothing quite gave him the satisfaction he had found leading men into battle and fighting for the Union. □

GLENN W. LAFANTASIE, who lives on a farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, is working on a biography of Alabama Colonel William C. Oates, Chamberlain's adversary at Little Round Top.

NOTES

1. The standard biographies are Willard M. Wallace, *Soul of the Lion: A Biography of Joshua L. Chamberlain* (New York, 1960); Alice Rains Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence: Joshua L. Chamberlain and the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London, 1992); Michael Golay, *To Gettysburg and Beyond: The Parallel Lives of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Edward Porter Alexander* (New York, 1994); Mark Perry, *Conceived in Liberty: Joshua Chamberlain, William Oates, and the American Civil War* (New York, 1997); John J. Pullen, *Joshua Chamberlain: A Hero's Life and Legacy* (Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1999).
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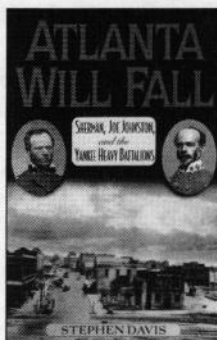
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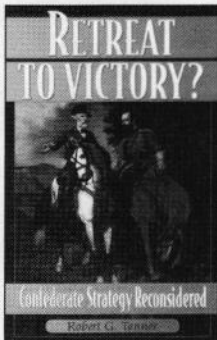
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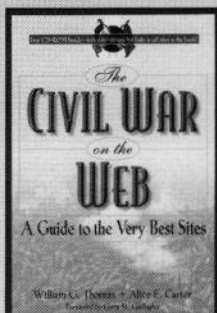
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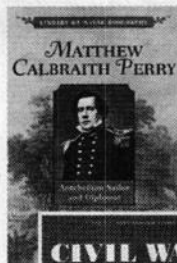


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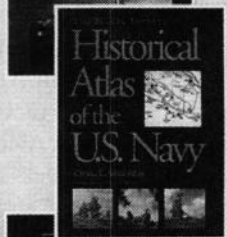


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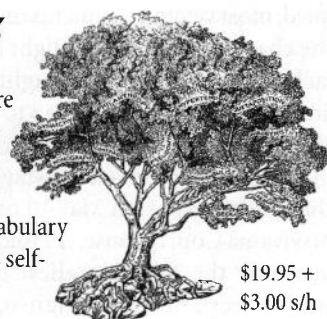
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GORDON C. RHEA

COLD HARBOR

ANATOMY OF A BATTLE

THE EARLY-MORNING assault of June 3, 1864, at Cold Harbor holds special fascination for historians. Almost as soon as the battle smoke settled, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's detractors denounced the offensive as a senseless venture fueled by the Union general-in-chief's bloodlust. Writers over the years have generally accepted without question the more sensational accounts and have dramatically inflated Union casualties. "The decisive action was over in eight minutes," a popular author effused, intoning the mantra that generations of historians have repeated as gospel. "Within less than an hour seven thousand men fell, killed or wounded, in moving against a fire power so uniform in its destructiveness that no living thing could advance in the face of it." A recent reviewer in the prestigious *New York Times Book Review* opined that Grant's attack "lost seven thousand men in an hour, most in the first ten minutes."

A fresh look reveals a Cold Harbor starkly different from the slaughter pen of lore. The big attack at dawn on June 3 did last about an hour, but total Union casualties could not have exceeded 3,500, and were probably less. While some regiments, chiefly newcomers, were badly mauled, most veteran regiments involved in the charge sustained only light losses. Attacks later in the day brought total Union casualties for all of June 3 to about 6,000 men, considerably fewer soldiers than Grant had lost on either May 5 or 6 in the Wilderness or on May 10 or 12 at Spotsylvania Court House. All told, June 3 was only the fifth bloodiest day of Grant's Overland Campaign for the Federals.

Grant's decision to attack at Cold Harbor was grounded in the Union commander's assessment that relentless pounding in the Wilderness and at

Spotsylvania had severely weakened the Confederates. "Lee's army is really whipped," Grant assured Washington on May 25 when Lee failed to attack the dangerously divided Union army on the North Anna River. "I may be mistaken, but I feel that our success over Lee's army is already insured." Subsequent events strengthened Grant's conviction. He crossed the Pamunkey River virtually unopposed, repulsed Confederate cavalry at Haw's Shop, whipped the rebels at Matadequin Creek, and seized the strategic crossroads settlement of Cold Harbor, repelling Confederate infantry forays there and at Bethesda Church. On the evening of June 1, Major General Horatio G. Wright's VI Corps and Major General William F. "Baldy" Smith's XVIII Corps overran part of the Confederate Cold Harbor line at a ravine called Bloody Run. Nightfall prevented Grant from exploiting the victory, but the lesson seemed clear. Lee's army was a defeated force and ripe for plucking.

Hoping to exploit his June 1 gains, Grant on June 2 rushed Major General Winfield S. Hancock's II Corps toward Cold Harbor. The troops arrived late, and Grant postponed the attack until June 3, giving Lee valuable time to perfect his entrenchments and shift more gray-clad soldiers to his Cold Harbor line. Grant, however, still believed that attacking made sense. Recently reinforced by the XVIII Corps and a flood of fresh regiments from Washington, the Union army was stronger than ever. Lee now stood a mere seven miles from Richmond, his back to the Chickahominy River, and his recent stumblings seemed to confirm that his army was on its last legs. Delay, Grant decided, would serve no purpose, and further maneuvering would be difficult and uncertain of outcome. A successful assault at this juncture stood to wreck the Confederate army, capture Richmond,

and bring the war to a speedy conclusion. What better gift could Grant offer President Lincoln on the eve of the Republican convention? Aggressive by nature and accustomed to taking risks, Grant seized the moment. If the offensive worked, the rewards would be tremendous. If it failed, Grant would treat the reverse as he had his earlier disappointments and try another tack. In short, the consequences of not assaulting— forfeiting the chance for quick victory and prolonging the war— seemed worse than attacking and failing. "Could we succeed by a general assault in breaking [Lee's] lines, the annihilation of his army was certain, as he would be



*The operation “would
have shamed a cadet at his
first year at West Point.”*

Confederate works, Cold Harbor/Richmond
National Battlefields. *Courtesy Chris E. Heisey*

driven back into the Chickahomony, whence escape was impossible,” was how a Union engineer put the case for an offensive. In respects, Grant’s reasoning underlying his decision to attack on June 3 at Cold Harbor paralleled the reasons leading Lee to launch his ill-fated assault on July 3 at Gettysburg. Both attacks were gambles, but in both instances, payoffs in the event of success promised to be large.

Different generals might have reached different conclusions, but certainly Grant’s decision was reasonable given the information at hand. “It was a nice question of judgment,” the aide Porter later noted. “After discussing the ques-

tion thoroughly with his principal officers, and weighing all the chances, he decided to attack Lee’s army in its present position. He had succeeded in breaking the enemy’s line at Chattanooga, Spotsylvania, and other places under circumstances which were not more favorable, and the results to be obtained now would be so great in case of success that it seemed wise to make the attempt.”

Although attacking at Cold Harbor had much to recommend it, the nature of the offensive chosen by Grant—an army-wide charge against Lee’s entire entrenched line—provoked legitimate criticism. The Cold Harbor front extended

more than six miles, making an assault difficult to coordinate and dissipating the Union army’s advantage of mass. As Hancock’s aide Francis A. Walker saw it—and it is difficult to disagree with him—Grant’s responsibility as general-in-chief was to “discover that weak point; to make careful and serious preparation for that attack, and to mass behind the assaulting column a force that shall be irresistible, if only once the line be pierced.” Rather than tending to those critical details himself, Grant delegated them to the Army of the Potomac’s titular head, Major General George G. Meade. The decision would prove disastrous.

Army of the Potomac Order-of-Battle

(Units not directly involved in the battle are not included)



Major General George G. Meade

Major General Winfield S. Hancock



Brigadier General Francis C. Barlow



1st



1ST BRIGADE

Colonel Nelson A. Miles

26th Michigan, 5th New Hampshire, 2nd New York Heavy Artillery, 61st New York, 81st Pennsylvania, 140th Pennsylvania, 183rd Pennsylvania



2ND BRIGADE

Colonel Richard Byrnes

28th Massachusetts, 63rd New York, 69th New York, 88th New York, 116th Pennsylvania



3RD BRIGADE

Colonel Clinton D. MacDougall

39th New York, 52nd New York, 57th New York, 111th New York, 125th New York, 126th New York



4TH BRIGADE

Colonel John R. Brooke

2nd Delaware, 7th New York Heavy Artillery, 64th New York, 53rd Pennsylvania, 145th Pennsylvania, 148th Pennsylvania



Brigadier General John Gibbon



2nd



1ST BRIGADE

Colonel H. Boyd McKeen

19th Maine, 1st Company Sharpshooters, 15th Massachusetts, 19th Massachusetts, 20th Massachusetts, 7th Michigan, 42nd New York, 59th New York, 82nd New York (2nd Militia), 184th Pennsylvania, 36th Wisconsin



2ND BRIGADE

Brigadier General Joshua T. Owen

152nd New York, 69th Pennsylvania, 71st Pennsylvania, 72nd Pennsylvania, 106th Pennsylvania



3RD BRIGADE

Colonel Thomas A. Smyth

14th Connecticut, 1st Delaware, 14th Indiana, 12th New Jersey, 10th New York Battalion, 108th New York, 4th Ohio, 8th Ohio, 7th West Virginia



4TH BRIGADE

Brigadier General Robert O. Tyler

8th New York Heavy Artillery, 155th New York, 164th New York, 170th New York, 182nd New York

Grant and Meade possessed starkly different military temperaments. Grant was an innovative warrior wedded to aggressive tactics, while Meade epitomized the Army of the Potomac's cautious bent. As the spring campaign unfolded, Grant became frustrated by Meade's caution and meddled increasingly in tactical details. "At first I had maneuvered the army," Meade candidly admitted to a group of visiting senators, "but gradually, and from the very nature of things, Grant had taken control." Meade seethed at his di-

Major General William F. Smith



Brigadier General William T. H. Brooks



1st



1ST BRIGADE

Brigadier General Gilman Marston

81st New York, 96th New York, 98th New York, 139th New York



2ND BRIGADE

Brigadier General Hiram Burnham

8th Connecticut, 10th New Hampshire, 13th New Hampshire, 118th New York



3RD BRIGADE

Colonel Guy V. Henry

21st Connecticut, 40th Massachusetts, 92nd New York, 58th Pennsylvania, 188th Pennsylvania, 1st U.S. Artillery, Battery B

Major General Horatio G. Wright



Brigadier General David A. Russell



1st



1ST BRIGADE

Colonel William H. Penrose

1st New Jersey, 2nd New Jersey, 3rd New Jersey, 4th New Jersey, 10th New Jersey, 15th New Jersey



2ND BRIGADE

Brigadier General Emory Upton

5th Maine, 121st New York, 95th Pennsylvania, 96th Pennsylvania, 2nd Connecticut Heavy Artillery



3RD BRIGADE

Brigadier General Henry L. Eustis

6th Maine, 49th Pennsylvania, 119th Pennsylvania, 5th Wisconsin



FOURTH BRIGADE

Colonel Nelson Cross

65th New York, 67th New York, 122nd New York, 23rd Pennsylvania, 82nd Pennsylvania



Brigadier General Thomas H. Neill



2nd



1ST BRIGADE

Brigadier General Frank Wheaton

62nd New York, 93rd Pennsylvania, 98th Pennsylvania, 102nd Pennsylvania, 139th Pennsylvania



2ND BRIGADE

Brigadier General Lewis A. Grant

1st Vermont Heavy Artillery, 2nd Vermont, 3rd Vermont, 4th Vermont, 5th Vermont, 6th Vermont



3RD BRIGADE

Colonel Daniel D. Bidwell

7th Maine, 43rd New York, 49th New York, 77th New York, 61st Pennsylvania



4TH BRIGADE

Colonel Oliver Edwards

7th Massachusetts, 10th Massachusetts, 37th Massachusetts, 2nd Rhode Island



Brigadier General James B. Ricketts



3rd



1ST BRIGADE

Colonel John W. Schall

14th New Jersey, 106th New York, 151st New York, 87th Pennsylvania, 10th Vermont



2ND BRIGADE

Colonel John W. Horn

6th Maryland, 9th New York Heavy Artillery, 110th Ohio, 122nd Ohio, 126th Ohio, 67th Pennsylvania, 138th Pennsylvania

XXXX = army; XXX = corps; XX = division;
X = brigade; = infantry

minished role, and the generals were barely on speaking terms by the time they reached the North Anna River. At Cold Harbor, however, Grant decided to give Meade another chance and left his unhappy subordinate to deploy the army corps, coordinate their movements, and post reserves to exploit any gains. "I had immediate and entire command of the field all day," Meade crowed to his wife of the June 3 operations.

Still smarting over his subordinate position and thoroughly disapproving of Grant's hard-hitting, army-wide assaults, Meade expressed his discontent by doing little. The record reveals no steps to reconnoiter the ground, coordinate the army's elements, or tend to the things that diligent generals ordinarily do before sending soldiers against fortified enemy lines. During the finger-pointing

that followed the botched assaults at Spotsylvania Court House, Grant's aides had decried Meade's inability to translate Grant's plans into action. "The result of Grant's having a middleman was to make the whole organization wooden," one of Grant's aides had observed. "Meade severed the nerve between the commander and chief and the army. He was a non-conductor." Grant was well aware that Meade was ill-suited to his aggressive style of fighting but felt he had to keep him on. Someone, after all, had to manage the tactical minutiae of running the army. June 3 would underscore the consequences of leaving operational details of a major offensive to a general with no heart for the assignment.

★ ★ ★ ★

NIGHTFALL ON JUNE 2 saw the two armies locked closely together in a sprawling formation meandering six miles from Old Church Road south to the Chickahominy River. Almost half of the national force—Major General Gouverneur K. Warren's V Corps and Major General Ambrose E. Burnside's IX Corps—was clustered around Bethesda Church, facing Major General Jubal A. Early's Confederate Second Corps. The other portion of the Union army—Smith's, Wright's and Hancock's corps, ranging from north to south in that order—comprised Grant's southern wing at Cold Harbor, facing west toward Confederates drawn from Lieutenant General Richard H. Anderson's First Corps, Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill's Third Corps, and Major General Robert Hoke's division. Almost half a mile of open country separated the two Union wings.

Lee's Cold Harbor line masterfully exploited the terrain. Major General Cadmus M. Wilcox's Confederate Third Corps division anchored the southern Confederate flank on Turkey Hill, overlooking the Chickahominy lowlands. Major General John C. Breckinridge's division picked up on Wilcox's left and carried the line north, with Brigadier General Gabriel C. Wharton's brigade ensconced on high ground north of Wilcox and Colonel George S. Patton's brigade holding the adjacent stretch of line. Hoke's division picked up on Breckinridge's left, Brigadier General James G. Martin's brigade extending north to Boatswain Creek, and Brigadier

General Alfred H. Colquitt's brigade continuing on to Cold Harbor Road. Brigadier General William Mahone's Third Corps division stood in reserve behind Hoke. Half a mile east, across Dispatch Station Road, stood Hancock's II Corps, with Brigadier General Francis C. Barlow's division facing Breckinridge, Brigadier General John Gibbon's division confronting Martin and Colquitt, and Major General David B. Birney's division in reserve.

The Confederates had also strengthened their defenses north of Cold Harbor Road, where Union troops had made temporary inroads on June 1. Brigadier General Johnson Hagood's brigade of Hoke's division reached from Cold Harbor Road north toward Bloody Run, Brigadier General Thomas L. Clingman's brigade supported Hagood, and Brigadier General Eppa Hunton's brigade carried the formation north across the forested ravine cut by Bloody Run. Facing them were the Union VI Corps divisions of Brigadier Generals David A. Russell, James B. Ricketts, and Thomas H. Neill. Major General Joseph B. Kershaw's division, reinforced by elements from Major General Charles W. Field's division, continued the Confederate line in an inverted horseshoe-shaped formation to another ravine three-eighths of a mile north. Opposing Kershaw were two XVIII Corps divisions—those of Brigadier Generals William T.H. Brooks and John H. Martindale—deployed in a compact formation, with the remaining XVIII Corps division under Brigadier General Charles Devens Jr. facing north to guard the XVIII Corps' northern flank. When the XVIII Corps attacked, it would find itself in a trap, enfiladed from both sides by Confederates.

Rain picked up after dark on June 2. Trenches filled with water, and cooking fires sputtered. In the battlefield's southern sector, Colonel George M. Edgar of the 26th Virginia Battalion was concerned. His stretch of earthworks bulged forward in a sharp salient, each of its two faces about two hundred yards long. Edgar's battalion and the Kanawha Company from the 22nd Virginia occupied the salient, along with guns from Captain William H. Caskie's Virginia Battery, of Hoke's division. These soldiers—Edgar had about four hundred men, and the Kanawha Company another fifty—stood spaced some three

**Brigadier General
John H. Martindale**



2nd

1ST BRIGADE

Brigadier General George J. Stannard

23rd Massachusetts, 25th Massachusetts, 27th Massachusetts, 9th New Jersey, 55th Pennsylvania

2ND BRIGADE

Colonel Griffin A. Stedman, Jr.

11th Connecticut, 8th Maine, 2nd New Hampshire, 12th New Hampshire, 148th New York



Hancock's aide, Francis A. Walker.

U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle

**As Walker saw it, Grant
should not have delegated the
major decisions to Meade.**

Army of Northern Virginia Order-of-Battle

(Units not directly involved in the battle are not included)

XXXX



General Robert E. Lee

XXX



**MAJOR GENERAL
RICHARD H. ANDERSON**

XXX

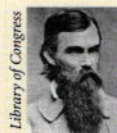


**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
AMBROSE P. HILL**



**Major General
Joseph B. Kershaw**

XX



**Brigadier General
William Mahone**

XX



X



**KERSHAW'S BRIGADE
COLONEL JOHN W. HENAGAN**

2nd South Carolina, 3rd South Carolina, 7th South Carolina, 8th South Carolina, 15th South Carolina, 20th South Carolina, 3rd South Carolina Battalion

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
BENJAMIN G. HUMPHREYS**

13th Mississippi, 17th Mississippi, 18th Mississippi, 21st Mississippi

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
WILLIAM T. WOFFORD**

16th Georgia, 18th Georgia, 24th Georgia Cobb's (Georgia) Legion, Phillip's (Georgia) Legion, 3rd Georgia Battalion Sharpshooters

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
GOODE BRYAN**

10th Georgia, 50th Georgia, 51st Georgia, 53rd Georgia

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
JOSEPH FINEGAN**

2nd Florida, 5th Florida, 8th Florida, 9th Florida, 10th Florida, 11th Florida



**Major General
John C. Breckinridge**

XX



X



**ECHOLS' BRIGADE
COLONEL GEORGE S. PATTON**

22nd Virginia, 23rd Virginia Battalion, 26th Virginia Battalion

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
GABRIEL C. WHARTON**

30th Virginia Battalion, 51st Virginia, 62nd Virginia (Mounted)

(X)



**MARYLAND LINE
COLONEL J. PERRIN CRANE**

2nd Maryland, 1st Maryland Battery



**Major General
Robert F. Hoke**

XX



X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
JAMES G. MARTIN**

17th North Carolina, 42nd North Carolina, 66th North Carolina

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
THOMAS L. CLINGMAN**

8th North Carolina, 21st North Carolina, 51st North Carolina, 61st North Carolina

X



**BRIGADIER GENERAL
JOHNSON HAGOOD**

11th South Carolina, 21st South Carolina, 25th South Carolina, 27th South Carolina

X

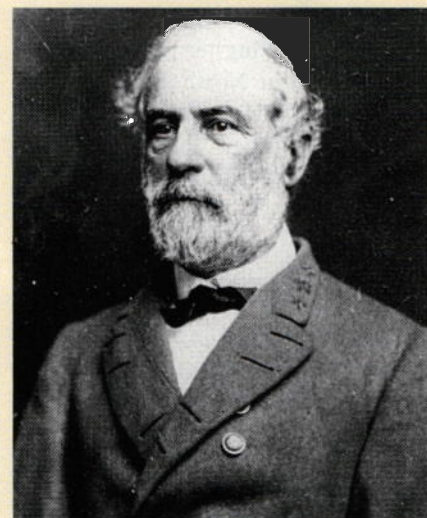


**BRIGADIER GENERAL
ALFRED H. COLQUITT**

6th Georgia, 19th Georgia, 23rd Georgia, 27th Georgia, 28th Georgia

XXXX = army; XXX = corps; XX = division;

X = brigade; = infantry



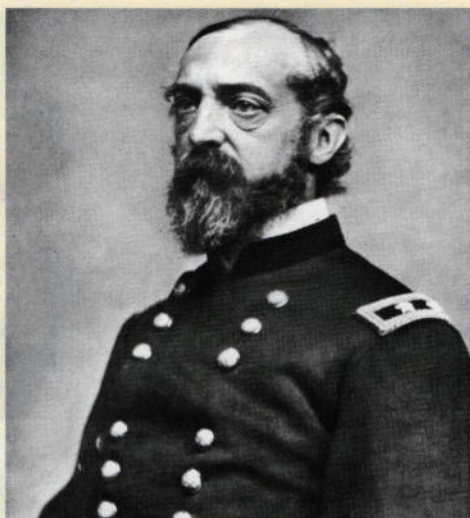
General Robert E. Lee

**Lee's Cold Harbor
line masterfully exploited
the terrain.**

feet apart. Protruding toward Barlow's Federals, the salient drew more fire than the rest of Breckinridge's line. A short distance in front of the salient's apex, the ground dropped off sharply, affording enemy troops a place to mass out of sight. As a Confederate artillerist later noted, the salient "was a piece of bad location of our line, allowing a dead space in front to come up to within forty to eighty yards." At this juncture, however, Edgar's men could do little to change the layout of their works. "We had to make the most of it," Edgar decided, "and stand or fall where we were." At Edgar's urging, his brigade commander Patton sent a lieutenant to find Breckinridge and alert him to the "exposed and weak condition of our line." He was unable to find the general, however, and gave up the search, much to Edgar's distress. "I worked my men nearly all night, in the drizzling rain, to strengthen my defenses, leaving but an hour before daylight to lie down and rest," Edgar later wrote, "I alone keeping watch." He was depressed, he recollected, "with a sense of impending catastrophe."¹

Meade announced the time for the attack and left his corps commanders to cooperate. Concerted action, however, was not in the cards. Smith had arrived only two days before and was regarded with suspicion by Meade and the other corps heads; Wright was new to corps command, having replaced Major General John Sedgwick on May 9, and had scant experience in major operations; and Hancock still suffered from a

*(Photo Credits) USAMHI: US Army Military History Institute; CC, VM: Cook Collection, Valentine Museum; SHC, UNCC: Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

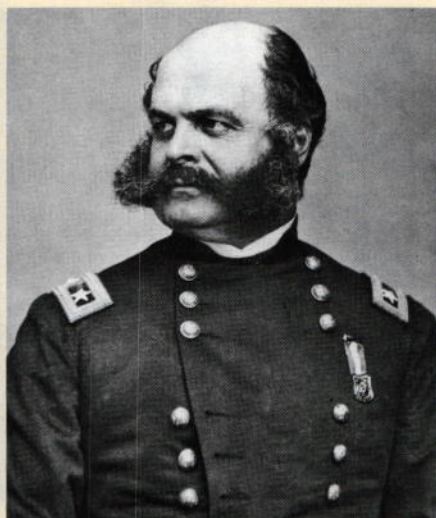


Major General George G. Meade

Smarting over his subordinate position, Meade expressed his rancor by doing little.

Gettysburg wound that left him in bad humor and which, along with drugs used to reduce the pain, severely impaired his abilities. On the northern end of the assault formation, Baldy Smith asked Wright about his plan of attack and offered to subordinate his XVIII Corps' charge to the VI Corps' assault. "His reply was that he was going to assault in his front," Smith later wrote. "I was, therefore, forced to make mine independently, yet keeping up the communication with the VI Corps." Nothing suggests that Wright and Hancock attempted to coordinate their offensives. And on the army's northern wing, relations between Warren and Burnside had deteriorated so badly that the two generals ceased communicating. The Army of the Potomac was a dysfunctional family, and neither Meade nor Grant seemed able to do anything about it.

MIST SWIRLED near daylight on June 3, obscuring objects more than a few yards ahead. The scene was chillingly familiar to veterans of the Union II Corps. Three weeks before, on a foggy, rain-drenched morning very much like this one, they had lined up for a 4:30 a.m. charge against Lee's Mule Shoe at Spotsylvania Court House. Now their superiors wanted them to repeat that performance. "I must confess that order was not received with much hilarity," a corporal in the 19th Maine recalled. "There was some hoot-



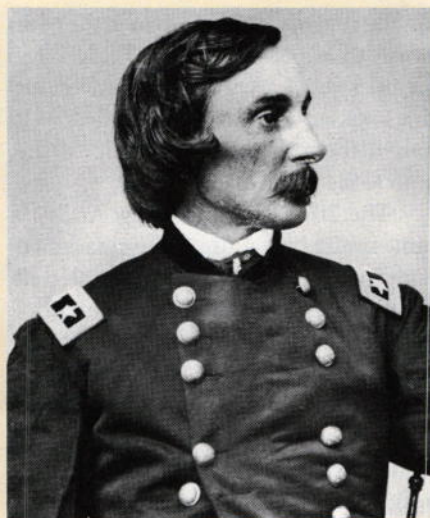
Generals Burnside and Warren

Relations between the two corps commanders had deteriorated so badly that they ceased communicating with one another.

ing at the brigade commanders by the soldiers, but when it was ascertained that these officers themselves were going to lead the men, there was no further hesitation."²

A signal gun was to send Hancock's, Wright's, and Smith's corps lunging toward the Confederate entrenchments. Half a mile north of Smith, Warren and Burnside were to attack as well, pinning down Confederate troops there and swinging south, if possible, to take pressure off Smith's northern flank. As events developed, however, Warren and Burnside would not start their attacks until nearly three hours after the appointed time. Hancock's, Wright's and Smith's men would make the great attack at Cold Harbor unaided. Many soldiers had shifted into position late on June 2 and had no idea about the terrain or the precise layout of the enemy line. "The division commanders only knew that they were to push forward until they struck the enemy's works," one of Hancock's officers recorded. "The attack was a simple brute rush in open day on strong works."³

Barlow's division held the southern end of Hancock's attack formation. Nelson Miles' brigade comprised Barlow's left wing, supported by Colonel Richard Byrnes' famed Irish Brigade. Barlow's right wing consisted of Colonel John R. Brooke's brigade posted in two lines, the first made up of Colonel Lewis Morris' 7th New York Heavy Artillery, a large, newly arrived regiment with more men than the rest of Brooke's regiments



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combined. In reserve behind Brooke was Colonel Clinton D. MacDougall's brigade of six New York regiments.

Roused from slumber at 3:30 a.m., Barlow's troops formed east of Dispatch Station Road while skirmishers from the 148th Pennsylvania disappeared west into the mist. Artillery opened from the distant rebel line, and the 11th New York Independent Battery in Brooke's rear replied. At 4:30 a.m., the 10th Massachusetts Light fired a shot signaling the attack. "Then was there indeed a veritable tempest," John D. Billings of the battery recalled. "At once it was responded to by the entire line, and by the rebels as well, who seemed to have been anticipating it. It had the fury of the Wilderness musketry, with the thunders of the Gettysburg artillery superadded. It was simply terrific."⁴

Barlow's two front brigades, Brooke on the right and Miles on the left, descended into the trace of Dispatch Station Road, worn a few feet below the ground by years of traffic. On the far ridge stood the salient in Breckinridge's line. Spotting Barlow's approach, Colonel Edgar hurried his troops into position. Caskie's guns opened on the advancing blue-clad forms, as did Captain William F. Dement's 1st Maryland Artillery, on higher ground behind the salient. Retiring Confederate pickets obstructed the artillery until a Maryland gunner jumped onto the works and waved the men out of the way with his swab. "The fire ran down our lines from left to right

like the keys of a piano," a man in the 66th North Carolina to the left of Edgar remembered, "and to the sharp crack of our rifles was added the roar of artillery as it joined them in the wild music of the hour—the carnival of death."⁵

The 7th New York Heavy Artillery came under brutal fire. "The air seemed buoyant and we were flying," recollected the regiment's Frederick Mather. Officers urged men on at the double quick, and soldiers scrambled up the incline. "The ground was blue with the dead and wounded who fell under the deadly fire of our artillery and infantry at close range," Edgar remembered, "far more than the writer ever saw fall on an equal area on any other battlefield." Reaching the sheltered hollow in front of the salient, the New Yorkers regrouped. "The grape and canister went over our heads with a 'swish,'" Mather wrote, "much as a charge of fine shot goes among a flock of blackbirds."

Bayonets flashing, soldiers of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery poured over the salient's walls. Virginians met them at the parapets, shooting and stabbing. "Here was enacted one of those awful scenes so seldom known in war," recollected Lieutenant W. W. George of Edgar's battalion. "The fighting was at close range, and hand to hand." A Federal shot George in the neck and rammed a bayonet into his left side only to be brained by a Confederate slamming him over the head with a gun butt. "Clubbed muskets, bayonets, and swords got in their deadly work," confirmed Augustus Du Bois of the 7th New York. "As I reached the top of the works a brave fellow confronted us," he remembered. "Standing below he thrust the bayonet into the comrade by my side and was about to give me the same dose, but a charge from my gun changed his mind."⁶

Combat swirled around Allen Woodman, the 26th Virginia Battalion's twenty-year-old color bearer. The night before, Woodman had found a brass bar shaped like a spear. Polishing it, he had fastened it on the end of his flagstaff and shown it to Captain T.C. Morton, who remarked that it looked pretty. "It is not only pretty," Woodman responded, "but if anybody tries to get these colors, I'll run this through him." Captain Morton thought it unlikely that the enemy would get close enough for Woodman to use his spear, but the young man was insistent.



II Corps generals and staff at Cold Harbor.

Francis C. Barlow (left of tree), Winfield S. Hancock (right of tree), David Birney (right of Hancock), and John Gibbon (right of Birney).

"We are going to have a graveyard fight tomorrow," he had predicted, "and are mighty apt to get mixed up."

Woodman, Colonel Edgar, and the battalion's adjutant Brown Craig stood in the middle of the salient, surrounded by the swirling melee. Spotting the flag, a Union officer and two men elbowed through the mob to Woodman and demanded that he surrender the banner. "This is the way I surrender, damn you," Woodman shouted and ran the spear through the officer's body. The men accompanying the officer shot Woodman, who fell gripping the staff. According to Captain Morton, Woodman opened his eyes, "saw that his precious flag was still safe, and with one last superhuman effort pulled himself forward and, reaching over, tore the colors from the staff, threw them behind them, and fell back a corpse." Christopher B. Humphreys of the regiment clasped the flag until four Federals wrested it from him and passed it back out of sight. Corporal Terrence Begley of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery was credited with capturing the flag. Killed a few months later at Reams Station, he posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his feat. Federals bayoneted Edgar in the shoulder, captur-

ing him, and killed his adjutant Craig. Resistance was futile, and Edgar's Virginians began surrendering. One enraged Confederate fired into the 7th New York's color guard, then threw down his musket and hollered, "I surrender." The regiment's Color Sergeant jammed his flagstaff's steel point into the rebel's mouth. "You spoke too late!" he roared. Herding captives into low ground immediately behind the salient, Federals made them bow low and mark time to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."⁷

Miles' brigade—all except two regiments picketing the army's flank—stepped off in tandem with the 7th New York Heavy Artillery, and Wharton's Virginians tore into them with heavy fire. The 2nd New York Heavy Artillery on the right of Miles' line took severe casualties—over ninety by one count—and dove for cover in the depression carved by Dispatch Station Road. Three veteran Pennsylvania and New York regiments on the left of Miles' line also halted and huddled in the road cut. Only one of Miles' regiments—the 5th New Hampshire—kept advancing. Commanded by Colonel Charles E. Hapgood, the regiment had fought in most of the Potomac Army's big battles and had seen bloody



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fighting in the Wheatfield at Gettysburg. Brought partially up to strength during the winter with new recruits, this was the New Hampshire regiment's first combat operation since Gettysburg, and the men were anxious to show they still had their fighting edge.

Enemy fire seemed lighter where Morris' New Yorkers were overrunning the Confederate line, so Hapgood directed his troops there. Without pausing to fire, Hapgood's regiment broke into the southern edge of the salient next to the 7th New York Heavy Artillery and began scooping up prisoners. Confederates, however, were strongly posted behind Edgar's salient. The 2nd Maryland, commanded by Captain J. Parran Crane, had dug in a few hundred yards behind the Virginians, and Brigadier General Joseph Finegan's brigade of Floridians from Mahone's division had entrenched nearby. Advancing west, the 5th New Hampshire sought cover around the McGehee family home, near the Maryland troops. "I see the gridiron, boys," called Private Charles H. Weems of the 2nd Maryland. "Let's charge 'em!" Finegan's men waited until the retreating Virginians were out of the way, then "rose with a yell," an officer recollected, "poured two volleys into the advancing droves of Yankees then jumped the breastworks and charged them." Marylanders and Flo-

ridians each later claimed to have spearheaded the counterattack. Perhaps J. William Thomas, a Maryland soldier, got it right in his diary. "Yanks break our line a little to our left and front," he wrote. "The line in rear of us [Finegan's men] charge. No order given us, but a majority of the [Maryland] battalion cannot be restrained and rush in with them."

Hapgood's New Englanders fought stubbornly, some crawling under the McGehee house and firing from behind brick piers supporting the structure. Crane and Finegan, however, drove them back into the salient, where Morris' New Yorkers were locked in furious combat with Edgar's Virginians, corralling prisoners and squelching stubborn pockets of resistance. Morris had his men load Caskie's captured guns with canister and turn them on the Confederates but could not find the friction primers necessary to discharge the pieces.

Marylanders and Floridians slammed into the mass of soldiers from New York, New Hampshire, and Virginia packed inside the salient. At the same time Confederates from the 22nd Virginia, south of the salient, pinched across the base of the V, and fire from the 66th North Carolina slanted in from the north. "The conflict was brief but terrible," a Marylander reported. "It was hand to hand; the artillery was wrested from the Federals, and they were driven out of the salient at the point of the bayonet." Confederates found the missing friction primers, turned Caskie's pieces on the Federals, and sprayed canister into the enemy at close range. Lieutenant Samuel T. McCullough of the 2nd Maryland, shot within ten yards of the salient's tip, wrote that he "had the satisfaction of seeing the bluebellies lying in heaps in front of me."

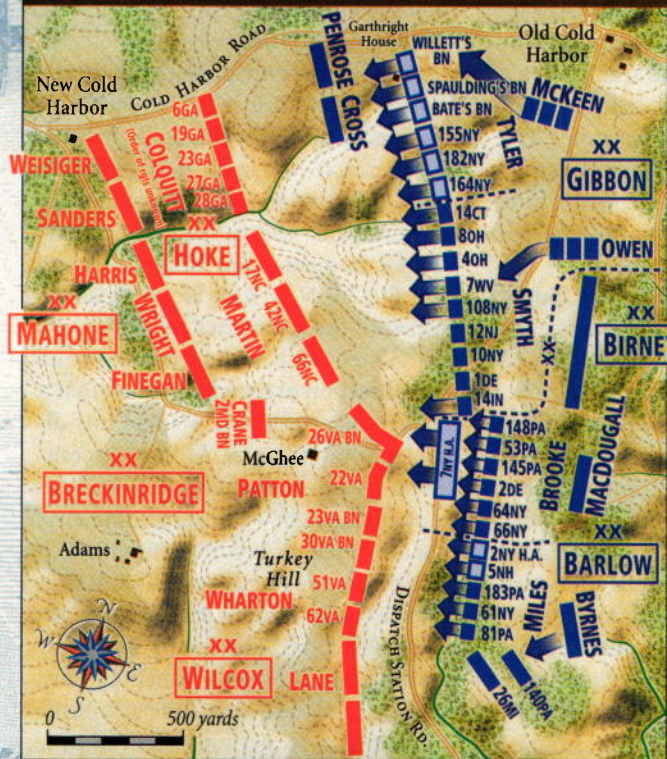
The 5th New Hampshire was in a terrible predicament. "The other regiments of [Miles'] brigade had not carried the enemy's works," Hapgood recognized, "and that part of [Brooke's] brigade, which went over on our right, was obliged to retire." The 5th New Hampshire, the regiment's Major James E. Larkin admitted, was "unavoidably in some disorder from charging so great a distance, fired upon from front and both flanks, and failing of any support." The Granite State men's only hope was to escape through the tangle of troops, and Hapgood gave the order to retreat. "Back we went," a New Englander remembered,

"being assisted by the battery on the left, which had been manned again."⁸

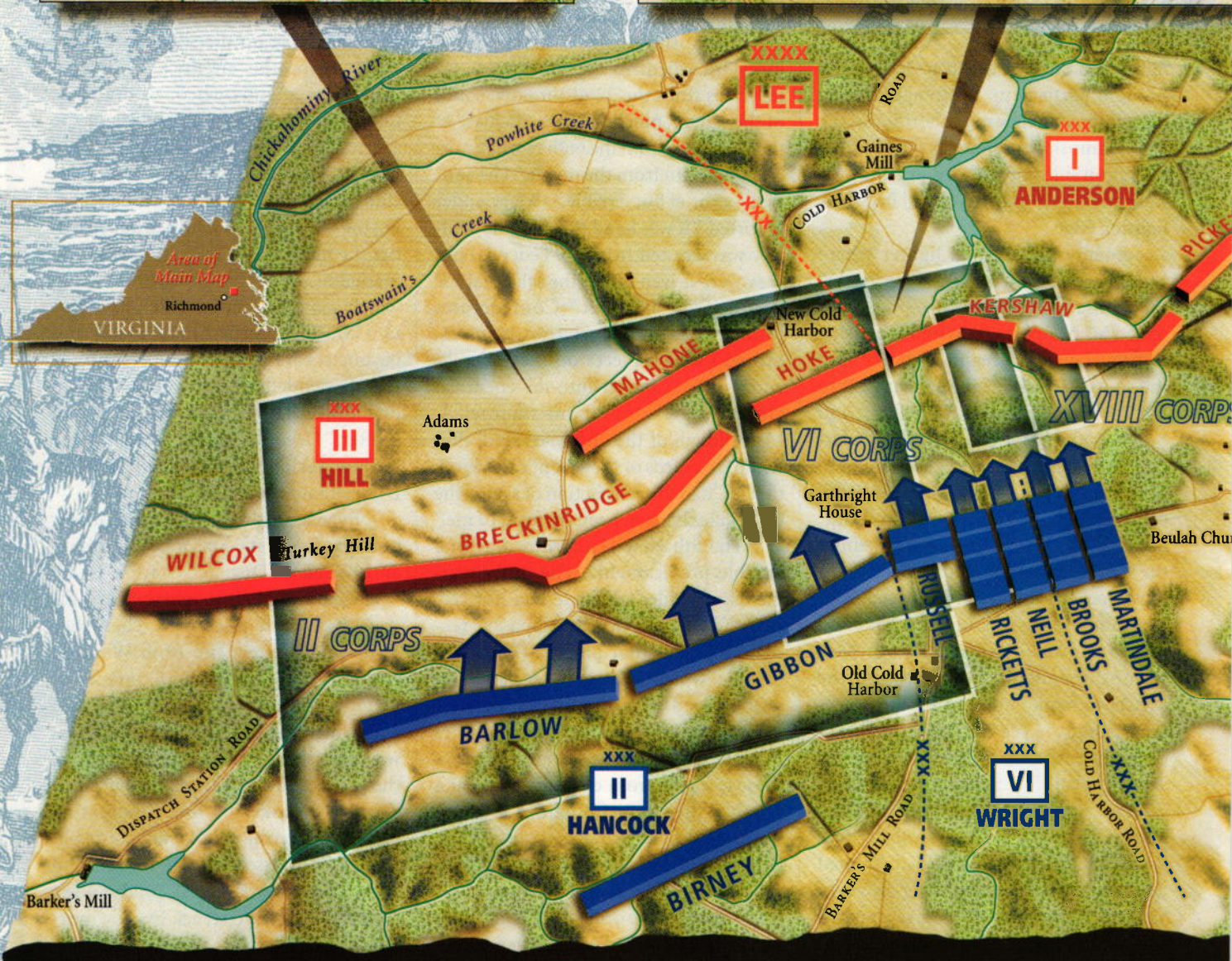
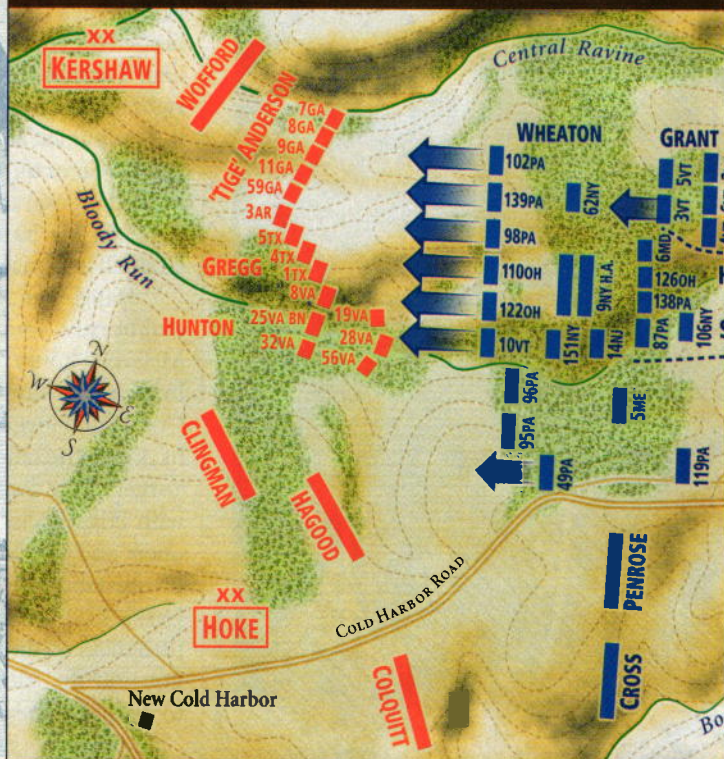
Brooke's second line with his veteran regiments had advanced to Dispatch Station Road, and MacDougall's brigade stood ready to join in. Birney's entire division, 8,000 strong, also waited for word to attack, but the signal never came. Brooke, it seems, had ridden forward with the 7th New York Heavy Artillery, witnessed the regiment's breakthrough, and ridden back to adjust his second line's direction of march to ensure that it hit the salient squarely. He had just directed Colonel James A. Beaver, commanding the second line, to wheel his troops to the right when canister knocked him unconscious. According to the 148th Pennsylvania's adjutant Joseph W. Muffly, the delay occasioned by Brooke's wounding proved fatal. "The enemy's supports crowded into the works which had just been carried," he wrote, "the assaulting troops began to stream back, [and the supporting line] was checked at the rail fence half way up the slope, not thirty yards from the enemy's position." Beaver's men entrenched, all the while under plunging fire from rebels in the salient and along the adjoining stretch of works. Casualties were severe and included Colonel Orlando H. Morris, leading the 66th New York. "We dropped under the hill," Beaver related, "pushed up gradually and got a little dirt thrown up which soon grew into a rifle pit." Adjutant Muffly recorded that "plates and bayonets, bare hands and rails from the fence, extended the work, deepened and established it, until it gave a precarious shelter." Deeming the attack a failure, Barlow decided against sending MacDougall into the fray.⁹

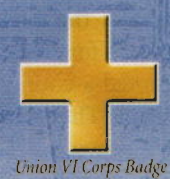
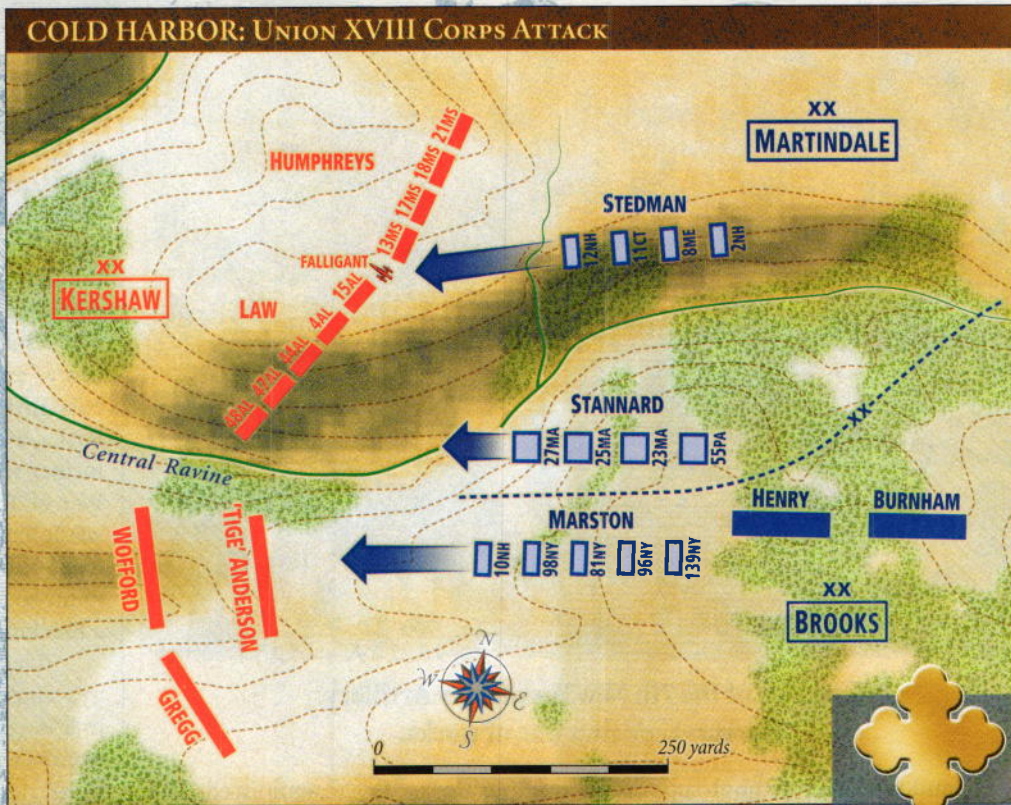
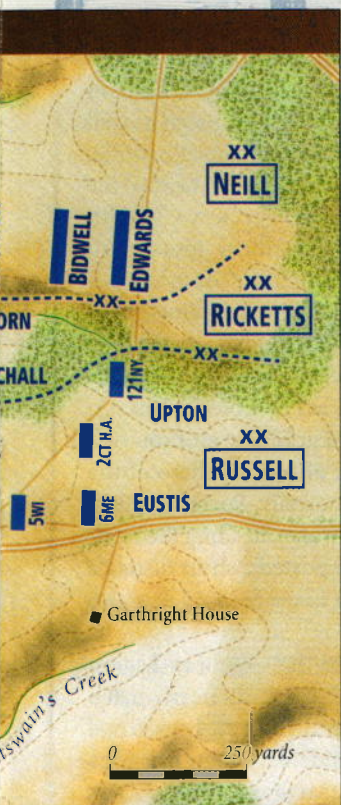
Byrnes' Irish Brigade came under grueling fire from Wharton's Virginians and halted at Dispatch Station Road, where many soldiers sought shelter in the depression with Miles' men. There they came under direct fire from Wharton and enfilading fire from Confederate batteries south along the ridge. "So long as the men could hug the ground the loss was not great," a Federal recounted, "as the pieces could not be depressed sufficiently to strike the line." Retreating across the clearing proved more difficult. A minie ball passed through the arm and back of Captain James D. Brady of the 63rd New York and struck Byrnes, mortally wounding him.¹⁰

COLD HARBOR: UNION II CORPS ATTACK



COLD HARBOR: UNION VI CORPS ATTACK





THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR JUNE 3, 1864

Union and Confederate Lines, Early Morning

"Green" Union Regimental Losses		
II CORPS	Brooks' Brigade	
	7th New York Heavy Artillery	422
	Miles's Brigade	
	2nd New York Heavy Artillery	91
	5th New Hampshire	202
	Tyler's Brigade	
	8th New York Heavy Artillery	475
	155th New York	130
	182nd New York	94
	164th New York	154
	McKeen's Brigade	
	36th Wisconsin	78
XVIII CORPS	Stannard's Brigade	
	25th Massachusetts	202
	27th Massachusetts	94
	23rd Massachusetts	55
	55th Pennsylvania	152
	Stedman's Brigade	
	11th Connecticut	110
	8th Maine	100
	2nd New Hampshire	75
	12th New Hampshire	150
	148th New York	120
	Marston's Brigade	
	81st New York	210
	96th New York	60
	98th New York	100
	139th New York	150

KEY TO CORPS MAP UNIT REPRESENTATION:
 [Blue Box] Represents a newly formed regiment, older regiment that had no significant battle experience, and/or regiment recently filled up with new recruits.



The men of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery
overrun Lee's first line of works.

Abandoned and without support, the survivors of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery tumbled back to the relative safety of the swale. Regrouping behind Beaver's fortifications, Lewis Morris attempted a counterattack to recover the salient. "They were repulsed by our men with heavy loss," a Floridian observed. "The ground in front was covered with dead and wounded Yankees, and they were glad to retire." Bending low behind their entrenchments, soldiers of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery "pressed their bodies into the earth, like moles," a student of the regiment noted. "Fought like hell and got licked like damnation," was the New Yorker Mather's verdict on the assault.¹¹

The fight at Edgar's salient had been brief. "The whole thing seemed to pass like a skyrocket," Captain Clarence Derrick of the 23rd Virginia Battalion remembered. Confederate losses were relatively small. Edgar's regiment, which absorbed the shock of the attack, lost 219 men, and the Kanawha Company lost about twenty-five. Crane's Marylanders got off relatively lightly, losing six men killed and thirty-two wounded, and the Florida brigade lost about thirty. When Colonel Edgar heard the Floridians and Marylanders charging, he fell to the ground and refused to go on, pointing to the bayonet wound in his shoulder. His captors fled, leaving him between hostile lines. "I lay flat on my belly until Finegan's brigade drove the penetrating column

over our works," Edgar reminisced, "and then crawled in." Edgar's men enjoyed tormenting their prisoners, some of whom were their former captors. "Bow to your betters, Yanks," they instructed, mimicking the humiliating routine the Federals had recently put them through. "Sing Dixie with all your might and holler for Jeff Davis!"¹²

By a recent count, the 7th New York Heavy Artillery suffered 422 casualties during the brief fight. Eighty-four men were killed, 261 wounded, and seventy-seven captured. The 5th New Hampshire, which went into the fight with 550 men, lost 202, well over a third of its strength.¹³

* * * *

GIBBON'S DIVISION reached across open fields from the right end of Barlow's line north to Cold Harbor Road, a distance of about a mile. The Corcoran Legion formed Gibbon's right. Raised in New York in 1862 by Brigadier General Michael Corcoran, a popular figure in the Irish community, the brigade's initial assignments had been humdrum affairs. The colorful Corcoran had died in December 1863, and in mid-May, war had caught up with his Legion, which joined the Army of the Potomac in time to participate in Grant's final attack at Spotsylvania Court House. Meade had added the 8th New York Heavy Artillery to the Legion and given it a new commander, Brigadier General Robert O. Tyler. A West Point

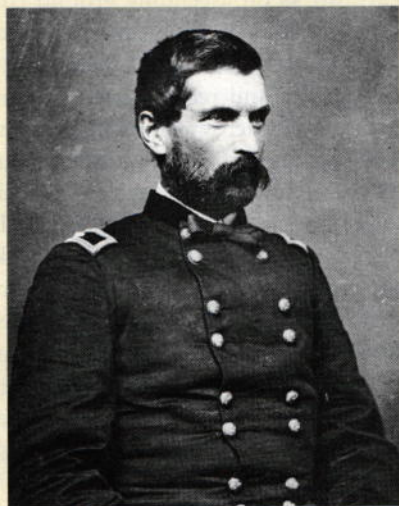
graduate versed in artillery, Tyler was no stranger to combat, having fought in McClellan's Peninsula Campaign as well as at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg, where he had headed the Potomac army's artillery reserve. The 8th New York Heavy Artillery more than doubled the size of the Corcoran Legion—the fat regiment contained over 1,600 soldiers—but added nothing by way of experience. Recruited in western New York, it was led by Colonel Peter A. Porter, a Harvard graduate and son of a former secretary of war and hero of the War of 1812. Ironically, Porter's cousin was John Breckinridge, heading the Confederate division posted a short distance to his south, and his wife Mary was also a Breckinridge.

Tyler arrayed the Corcoran Legion in a single line of two ranks nearly half a mile long. The terrain that the Legion had to cross was formidable. On the brigade's right, near the Garthright house, was Colonel Porter's 8th New York Heavy Artillery. Major James Willett's 1st Battalion and Major Erastus M. Spaulding's 2nd Battalion of the regiment faced Colquitt's Georgians across half a mile of cleared ground. Boatswain Creek's headwaters originated south of Spaulding's battalion to form a swampy, heavily wooded tract of impenetrable marsh a quarter-mile across. When the 8th New York Heavy Artillery advanced, its southernmost battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Willard W. Bates, along with the 155th New York and 182nd New York on Bates' left, would head directly into the swamp. The 164th New York on the southern end of the Legion's line could avoid the worst of the marshy ground by veering around the morass' southern edge. The maneuver, however, would detach the regiment from the rest of the brigade and bring it against a segment of rebel works held by Martin's Tar Heels. Although headquarters had ordered reconnaissances, Hancock and Gibbon were apparently ignorant of Boatswain Creek and the havoc it would cause their charge. The failure of Union planners to take the swamp into account was especially puzzling because Boatswain Creek had been an integral part of the Federal defensive line during the Battle of Gaines' Mill in June 1862.

Smyth's brigade stretched south in double lines from Tyler's left, facing Martin's entrenched North Carolinians.

Unlike Tyler's less experienced soldiers, Smyth's troops were seasoned veterans, having fought with the Army of the Potomac since Antietam. Gibbon's remaining two brigades waited in reserve, Colonel H. Boyd McKeen behind Tyler and Brigadier General Joshua T. Owen behind Smyth, each brigade's regiments stacked in successive lines, one behind the other. When Tyler's and Smyth's extended lines found weak points, McKeen and Owen were to "push rapidly forward and over the front line in column and effect a lodgment, if possible, on the enemy's works, and not to deploy till they got there."

Colquitt's Georgians squinted through fog toward the distant Union line. Troops seemed to be massing, presaging an attack. "This campaign is the first in which our troops have had the privilege of fighting behind protection of any kind, and it is fun for them," a Georgian explained. "They lounge about with their accoutrements on and gun close at hand, laughing and talking." The Georgians were ready for the Heavy Artillerists.¹⁴



Library of Congress

Brigadier General John Gibbon

"I found one whole brigade including its commander [Owen] sound asleep."

At the signal gun's discharge, Major Willett ordered his men over their protective works. "Standing upon the parapet I looked anxiously to the left about a minute," Willett recollected, "when I saw Colonel Porter suddenly appear upon the top of the breastworks near the extreme left of the regiment." Porter drew his sword, jumped onto the works by the col-

ors, and with a flourish of his blade ordered the men ahead. "It was but the work of a moment to form our line," recollected Captain James Maginnis, temporarily commanding Spaulding's battalion, "and on we went, guns at a trail, arms and bayonets fixed."

Musketry and cannon fire picked up from the far works. The clearing afforded no cover, and men began falling. "The rebels instantly opened on us a perfect storm of musketry, all along the lines, also grape and canister, and the air was full of messengers of death," Captain Maginnis recalled. "The lead and iron filled the air as the snow flakes in an angry driving storm." Major Willett's brother Joseph remembered that the "work of death" began right away. "Shells screamed through the air bursting over our heads while the rattle of musketry was terrible," he wrote. Closer the 8th New York Heavy Artillery drew to Colquitt's line, and faster men fell, survivors closing gaps in the ranks. Soldiers crowded together, intuitively seeking comfort from the press of soldiers around them. They advanced faster, first at a double-quick, then some broke into



Cook Collection, Valentine Museum

Brigadier General Alfred H. Colquitt

A former U.S. congressman, after the war Colquitt went on to become governor of Georgia and a U.S. senator.

a run. It seemed to Lieutenant Eli Nichols that "few men fell until we reached within [eighty yards] of the enemy's first line, when they opened upon us with canister [and] grape hurling it into our faces and mowing down our lines as wheat falls before the reaper." Nichols found it "terrible to see our brave boys falling so rapidly and without a chance of success," he

wrote home a few days later. "God grant that I may never see the like again."

Willett's and Maginnis' battalions jammed into the interval between Boatswain Swamp and the road. Bates' battalion peeled left, slipping south of the swamp. Slammed by relentless fire, Willett broke connection with Maginnis. VI Corps troops on Willett's right had not advanced, exposing Willett's bare right flank to angling fire from Hagood's South Carolinians north of Cold Harbor Road. "Major Willett attempted to close the ranks, drew his revolver and was about to give the command to fire when a ball struck him in the shoulder passing out I believe above the lung just grazing the jugular vein," Willett's brother recorded. "On, still unfaltering, the battalion passed until within [twenty yards] of the rebel breastworks—when a terrible enfilading fire of grape and canister swept along the line." Troops, Willett noted, "fell as grass before the Reaper—only swifter." The charge's momentum stalled, "stopped from sheer exhaustion within a stone's throw of the enemy's works." Continuing on was impossible, and retreating across the open field spelt certain death. A Georgian remembered that he and his companions "had a cross fire on them that it was almost impossible for a man to live under." Washington L. Dunn of the 27th Georgia noted in his diary that the Federals "did not come closer than our rifle pits."¹⁵

Attrition in command was tremendous. Early in the charge a cannon ball shattered Tyler's ankle, seriously injuring him. Colonel Porter, now commanding the brigade, pressed on at the head of the 8th New York, almost to Colquitt's works. A bullet tore through his neck, knocking him to the ground. According to one account, he stood part-way up, fell to his knees, and cried, "Dress upon the colors!" Riddled by as many as six bullets, he toppled lifeless in front of the Confederate line. Command devolved on Colonel James P. McIvor of the 170th New York. McIvor, however, was in the rear with his regiment guarding artillery and powerless to influence developments at the front.¹⁶

Porter's leftmost battalion under Bates slanted south into a stand of thick timber and undergrowth. Rebel works, hidden in brush on the other side of Boatswain Creek, came alive with fire. "The air seemed completely filled with

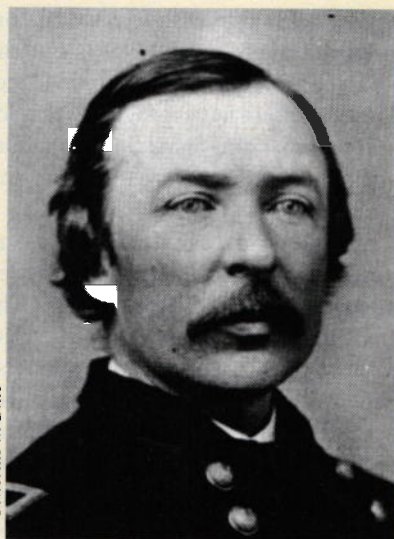
screaming, exploding shell and shot of all descriptions, and our soldiers were falling fast," a Heavy recollected. "We were located where we could not advance, neither could we retreat without exposing the company or ascending a rise of ground which would expose us to the enemy." Like their compatriots to the north, they bent low and scrambled for cover. "Lying close to the ground, some of us loading and firing, while others passed rails from an old fence which chanced to be a few rods in the rear, we placed the rails in line in front of us," a Union man recalled, "then, with bayonet, knife, or any other implement to be had, dug a trench, throwing the earth onto the rails as a protection against the enemy's musketry."¹⁷

Colquitt had stopped the 8th New York Heavy Artillery cold. "It could not be called a battle," wrote W. I. Hallock of the regiment. "It was simply a butchery, lasting only ten minutes." Lieutenant Swan agreed. "It was horrible," he wrote home. "It is a wonder that a single man escaped the hail storm of bullets and shell." A New Jersey soldier who watched the carnage likened it to the Biblical destruction of the host of Sennacherib. "It was the most sickening sight of this arena of horrors," he remembered, "and the appearance of these bodies, strewn over the ground for a quarter of a mile, and in our view for days, can never fade from our recollections." A Georgian concurred. "The open field in front of Colquitt is blue with Yankees," he wrote. "I have never seen as many dead in one place. In front of two companies of the 28th Georgia regiment several [men] counted seventy-five dead Yankees, and the slaughter in front of the other regiments was equally great." A man in the 6th Georgia noted that his own regiment lost only two men, making the fight "the most fortunate battle we had ever been in, if we take into consideration the magnitude of the battle and the great disparity of numbers."¹⁸

The charge was over for the 8th New York Heavy Artillery. The ordeal for the regiment's survivors, however, was just beginning. For the next sixteen hours, they would lay pinned in front of Colquitt's entrenchments, digging and fighting for their lives.

Tyler's remaining regiments advanced simultaneously with the 8th New York Heavy Artillery. The 155th and

Generals in Blue



Brigadier General Joshua Thomas Owen
Gibbon preferred charges against Owen for disobeying orders at Cold Harbor, but his unauthorized move to the left was actually a smart one.

182nd New York, next to Bates' battalion, ended up in the same morass as the Heavies on their right. Captain Michael Doran, commanding the 155th New York, dressed the regiment behind the protective cover of a ridge and sent it forward under devastating fire in front of a muddy ravine carved by a feeder to Boatswain Creek. The soldiers attempted to return fire, Adjutant John R. Winterbotham reported, "[but] they were no match for the entrenched rebels, and the supports failed to come up but they would not fly but stood like heroes." The 155th took devastating casualties—some one hundred and thirty men, about half the soldiers who made the charge—but was unable to advance. After thirty minutes of fruitlessly trading fire with the Confederates from a distance of only fifty yards, Captain Doran pulled his regiment's remains back behind a slight ridge only 150 yards from the rebel line, where the troops began digging. The 182nd New York, on Doran's left, also dropped behind the ridge, losing ninety-four soldiers in the process. "We felt it was murder, not war," Private Newell Smith of the 155th New York reported, "or that at best a very serious mistake had been made." Concluded Adjutant Winterbotham: "The idea of our charging the enemy's line with the number we had was preposterous."¹⁹

On the Corcoran Legion's left, Colonel James P. McMahon edged the 164th

U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle



Brigadier General James G. Martin
A brilliant administrator, the one-armed Martin was popular with his men, who on one occasion carried him shoulder high, hailing "Old One Wing."

New York south of Boatswain Creek's lower tributary, separating his regiment from the rest of the brigade. Ahead was the 17th North Carolina, waiting behind earthworks on ascending ground running from Boatswain Creek onto Turkey Ridge's northern shoulder. Decked out in gaudy blue and red Zouave uniforms, McMahon's men made inviting targets. They advanced through a hail of musketry—many Carolinians fired a deadly combination of three buckshot and a ball—overran an advanced line of works, captured an officer and forty-five soldiers, and continued on. Attacking a second line of entrenchments—perhaps another advance line, or maybe the main works themselves—McMahon's New Yorkers waged a fierce face-to-face fight with the North Carolinians. Unable to maintain their hold, they dropped back and began digging. The charge cost McMahon eleven officers and 143 men killed, wounded, and captured. Chief among the casualties was McMahon himself. Several versions of his death circulated, although none were penned by anyone there to see it. His brother, the VI Corps aide Martin McMahon, described a hero's death astride rebel earthworks, flag in hand. Adjutant Winterbotham, a close friend of the deceased colonel and whose regiment fought near to the 164th New York, told a different but equally poignant tale. "When all his men had been shot down around him," Winterbottom

wrote home a week later, "and he had so few about him that the rebels said they thought they were coming in to give themselves up instead of to assault his works, called upon him to surrender, but he would not do it and they shot him down." Two Confederates from the 17th North Carolina captured the New York regiment's flag, Lieutenant Wilson G. Lamb of the 17th later claimed. Dead Yankees, Lamb reported, lay strewn in front of the regiment's works so thickly "that one could have walked on their bodies its whole extent."²⁰

Smyth's soldiers had stepped off in tandem with Tyler's men to their north. Their advance took them through woods, where they engaged Confederate pickets but otherwise missed the killing volleys of musketry devastating the Corcoran Legion. They emerged from the forest a few hundred yards from Martin's Confederates arrayed on high ground. As Smyth's troops started up the gentle slope, concentrated musketry and artillery fire rocked them back on their heels.

Smyth was an Irishman, but the similarity between his brigade and Corcoran's Irish Legion ended there. Smyth's troops were veterans well versed in the killing power of entrenchments—they had helped repel Pickett's charge at Gettysburg—and they quickly recognized the venture as a forlorn exercise. Regiments on the northern end of Smyth's line, opposing the 42nd North Carolina of Martin's brigade, grasped the situation soon enough to avoid serious losses. The 14th Connecticut entered into "some sharp skirmishing but no general engagement," according to the regiment's historian, and had the good sense to entrench "in front of the enemy's works and remain quiet." The 4th Ohio, on the 14th Connecticut's left, saw somewhat more action. "We were at once met by shot, shell and canister," an Ohio soldier remembered. "Nothing daunted, most of the men hurried forward, drove in the skirmishers and sharpshooters of the enemy, captured their rifle pits, came within a few rods of the Confederate earthworks, but being without support, fell back a few rods, formed a new line in the edge of a wood in the first line of captured rifle pits, threw up breastworks of timber and whatever came first to hand and could be made available." Judging from the 4th Ohio's losses—three killed and seventeen wounded—the

regiment's retreat to the woods was more precipitous than the soldier's account implied.²¹

Losses mounted on the southern portion of Smyth's line, where terrain was more open and where the Confederate position—held by Martin's 42nd and 66th North Carolina—swung forward, giving gunners of Major Charles R. Grandy's battery, Norfolk Light Artillery Blues, clear fire into the flank of the advancing Federals. The 12th New Jersey stepped into the field facing rising ground. Trees had disordered the regiment's line, and the troops reformed on the western edge of the clearing. Captain McComb, commanding the 12th New Jersey, had just arranged his troops when a shell whizzed lengthwise along the line "about two feet from the ground," a soldier recollected, "and so close that it seemed to knock down almost every man in the regiment, just by the force of its wind." The shell hit McComb, who was a pace in front of the regiment, and horribly mangled his leg. While their commander lay bleeding on the ground—he would die a month later from the injury—the regiment started across the field. "Our flank was in air, and the rebel batteries began to rake our line endways with grape and canister," Private William P. Haines remembered. "As the rebels very pointedly refused to vacate, we hurriedly fell back, gathering up the wounded as we ran, and sought shelter in the edge of the woods, and back of the same tree from which we had rolled the dead rebel a few minutes before." Casualties numbered about fifty, highest for any regiment in Smyth's brigade.²²

The 10th New York Battalion, known as the National Zouaves, pressed forward on the 12th New Jersey's left. Emerging from the woods, the soldiers saw before them "an open space completely swept by cannon and musketry," according to a New Yorker. "The fire was murderous," he recalled, "and it would have been a sheer impossibility to have crossed the open ground which intervened and captured the intrenchments with our thin and straggling line." A few men made the attempt and were killed or wounded. The rest of the regiment began digging behind a slight rise a hundred and fifty yards from the rebel works. Smyth's charge was over. "We advanced to the enemy's guns and earthworks but not being supported we had to fall back

a short distance where we erected a line of works," Smyth noted in his diary.²³

McKeen's brigade, behind Tyler on the right of Gibbon's formation, started across the field by the Garthright house. McKeen's depleted veteran regiments formed the front of the advancing brigade. Behind came the 36th Wisconsin, a novice regiment that had lost heavily on June 1. As the situation became clear—another suicidal charge against impenetrable rebel defenses—veteran regiments slowed their march and took cover, leaving the 36th Wisconsin in the fore of the advancing column.



U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle

Colonel James P. McMahan
**Chief among the casualties was
McMahan himself.**

The popular McKeen was killed early in the charge, and command devolved on Colonel Frank A. Haskell of the 36th Wisconsin, the brigade's senior colonel. Conspicuous at Gettysburg, Haskell had so impressed Gibbon that the division commander intended to recommend his promotion to brigadier general. Haskell halted behind a low roll of ground seventy-five yards from Colquitt's entrenchments, reformed the brigade, and ordered a charge. "The men rose to obey but were

met by a shower of bullets," a soldier in the 36th Wisconsin related. Realizing that he could never take the works by storm, Haskell directed his troops to lie down. Within seconds, he was shot in the head and killed. "Taking advantage of a little rise in the land in our front," a man in the 19th Maine wrote, the brigade "fell upon the ground, and, in an incredibly short space of time, with bayonets, tin plates, or whatever they could lay their hands upon, threw up a slight earthwork in front, sufficient to protect them from the enemy's bullets."²⁴

As McKen's brigade swung to the right, Joshua Owen's brigade shifted left. Born in Wales, Owen had pursued varied pre-war careers as a teacher, lawyer, and legislator in Pennsylvania. Commanding the Philadelphia Brigade—the 152nd New York and five regiments from Pennsylvania, including the recently arrived 184th Pennsylvania—he had aroused Gibbon's ire at Spotsylvania Court House by retreating after Gibbon had directed him to attack. He also got off to a bad start on June 3. "I was up before daylight and riding to the front to see that the troops were all in position ready for the assault, at the hour named, in accordance with the orders issued the night before," Gibbon wrote. "I found one whole brigade including its commander [Owen] sound asleep." Awakening Owen and his men, Gibbon sent them to the front.²⁵

An unrepentant Owen continued to ignore Gibbon's instructions. Gibbon wanted the Philadelphia Brigade to attack in column, and he made that point explicit, instructing Owen to "assault the enemy's works with his brigade in column in rear of the right of Colonel Smyth's brigade, and not to deploy his column [in line] until the head of it reached the enemy's intrenchments." Owen started out as directed, massing his brigade in eight lines and pushing ahead behind Smyth's right flank, the 184th Pennsylvania leading. When he reached the swampy terrain on Smyth's right he decided on another tack. Instead of advancing as ordered, he inclined the Philadelphia Brigade sharply southwest through woods to emerge in line on Smyth's left flank.

Confederate works loomed only a hundred and fifty yards away, on high ground. The Philadelphia Brigade, by accident rather than design, had come out

northeast of Edgar's salient, facing the 66th North Carolina. The Marylanders and Floridians had launched their counterattack, and Barlow's troops—the 7th New York Heavy Artillery and the 5th New Hampshire—were streaming back down the slope. Accounts later claimed that portions of Owen's brigade broke into Edgar's salient and captured prisoners—a deed of dubious validity attributed variously to the 184th Pennsylvania and the 152nd New York. There can be no doubt, however, that Owen's troops came under severe fire and entrenched on Smyth's left, forming a junction with the 7th New York Heavy Artillery on their left. The 152nd New York dug in less than a hundred yards from the salient's northern face, probably in the sheltered hollow. "The side hill below the line in front was filled with men who were engaged in loading and passing the muskets to those in front," a New Yorker recalled, "who were keeping up an incessant fire." One of Barlow's guns fired over the Philadelphia Brigade in an attempt to knock down the McGehee house. "For the purpose of getting the exact range," a soldier recorded, "the cannon was depressed to such a degree that the solid shot and shell fell short and buried in the side hill, exploding among the men, causing great consternation, as there was no remedy but to lay still and receive the death dealing missiles."²⁶

Gibbon was furious. "General Owen, instead of pushing forward in column through Smyth's line, deployed on his left as soon as the latter became fully engaged," he wrote, "and thus lost the opportunity of having his brigade well in hand and supporting the lodgment made by Smyth and McMahon." Gibbon preferred charges against Owen, who was mustered out of service in mid-July. In truth, Owen's decision to shift left of Smyth had been a smart move. Contrary to Gibbon's assertion, Smyth and McMahon had made no lodgment, and throwing Owen's brigade into the Boat-swain Creek sector would only have increased Union casualties. Difficult terrain and the strength of Martin's works—Mahone's entire division was waiting in reserve behind this very point—guaranteed a Union failure. By moving left, Owen unintentionally brought his troops to the only place where the II Corps had broken the Confederate line. He arrived too late to assist, but that was not his fault.



Library of Congress

UNLIKE HANCOCK'S TROOPS, who had first seen the Cold Harbor front the previous afternoon, Wright's VI Corps had held the same ground for more than two days and understood exactly what they faced. Around 4:00 a.m., Wright and a coterie of staff and engineer officers rode along Russell's sector, attracting considerable attention from Confederate sharpshooters in adjacent fields. They agreed that it would be suicidal for Russell to attack, and word quickly spread that Wright had countermanded the assault order. "This was very welcome news to us, because had we charged a majority of us must inevitably have been shot," an officer in the 121st New York recounted. "Every inch of that ground in front of us was commanded by sharpshooters, and our works being farther advanced than those on either flank we would have received a partially enfilading fire."²⁷

When Gibbon attacked south of Cold Harbor Road, Brigadier General Henry L. Eustis' brigade of Russell's division edged cautiously forward north of the road "under a heavy storm of lead from the enemy," a Pennsylvanian recorded, "and halted under the crest of a small hill." Having sweltered through June 2 on this very ground—"our rifle pits kept the balls off, but not the sun," a man



**Photographed at Cold Harbor, General Horatio Wright (center)
and his VI Corps staff.**

quipped—Lieutenant Colonel Gideon Clark, temporarily commanding Eustis' brigade, set the men to constructing breastworks from brush and fallen timber. Brigadier General Emory Upton's troops, on Eustis' right, did not even pretend to attack. "Another assault was ordered," Upton explained, "but, being deemed impracticable along our front, was not made." Eustis' and Upton's offensives were so tentative that Hagood's Confederates never realized that an offensive had occurred. "It may sound incredible," Hagood reminisced, "but it is nevertheless strictly true, that the writer of these Memoirs, situated near the center of the line along which this murderous repulse was given, and awake and vigilant of the progress of events, was not aware at the time of any serious assault having been given." Upton's brigade lost twenty-one men on June 3, and Eustis' casualties were of the same order.²⁸

Immediately north of Russell, Ricketts' division faced into Bloody Run. Confronting Hunton's Virginians, Ricketts' men showed no enthusiasm for attacking. Ricketts' leftmost brigade under Colonel John W. Schall slogged into the swampy ravine, but none of the soldiers

ever got close to their objective. "We advanced under a murderous fire in our front from the enemy's artillery, sharpshooters and when in range of its main line of battle and were simply slaughtered," wrote Captain Lemuel Abbott of the 10th Vermont, evidently mistaking Hunton's advance rifle pits for the main Confederate fortifications. Unable to make headway, Schall's soldiers started digging "under a severe artillery fire of the enemy," a Federal recalled. Schall was shot in the arm, and command of the brigade devolved on Lieutenant Colonel Caldwell K. Hall of the 14th New Jersey. "It was designed to attack along our whole line at once," Major Peter Vredenburg of the 14th New Jersey wrote home of the assault, "but it fizzled in some part of it, and that upset the design." Colonel John W. Horn, heading Ricketts' other brigade, tried to send his first line forward, but Confederate fire pinned it down. "Finding a farther advance would be hazardous, I gave the order to halt," Colonel Otho Binkley of the 110th Ohio reported. The men lay down and quickly constructed a "rude line of fence rails," an Ohioan recalled, "exposed to a severe cross fire from artillery and musketry."²⁹

Jammed between Ricketts on his left and Brooks' XVIII Corps division on his right, Neill had shoe-horned his troops into a narrow column, brigades stacked one behind the another. In front came Brigadier General Frank Wheaton's brigade, a predominantly Pennsylvania outfit that had missed the worst of June 1's fighting on a rearguard assignment protecting wagons. Behind Wheaton were the brigades of Brigadier General Lewis A. Grant, Colonel Daniel D. Bidwell, and Colonel Oliver Edwards, the latter containing many troops whose terms of service were almost finished. The main Confederate line—manned here by Brigadier General John Gregg's Texans and Arkansans and Brigadier General George T. "Tige" Anderson's Georgians—was plainly visible two hundred yards away. Marching into the field, Wheaton's soldiers received a devastating volley from the Georgians in front and brutal enfilade fire from the Texans. Shattered, the brigade fell back to the first line of works it had crossed during its advance and "reversed" the entrenchments, huddling low to avoid annihilation.

Lewis Grant's Vermont soldiers moved up and prepared to attack. "Everything indicated that a regular engagement was going to take place," recollected the Vermonter Wilbur Fisk. "Well we could make another charge and do it bravely but after so much hard fighting we did not feel that enthusiasm we did at first," he reminisced. "I dreaded the contest. If there had been an honorable way for me to get out of it I should have done so. But duty said go forward and trust in God and so I was determined to do." Leaving the protection of their entrenchments, the 3rd and 5th Vermont came under blistering fire from the main Confederate works. "Satisfied that men were needlessly exposed," Grant later wrote, "and that a skirmish line would hold the position as well as a line of battle and with less loss of life, and having obtained the direction of the assistant adjutant general of the division in the matter, I withdrew those regiments, leaving a skirmish line from each." Neill's advance was over. The Vermont Brigade lost about one hundred men and Wheaton about one hundred and eighty. The remaining brigades were not engaged and sustained only minor losses.³⁰

Nowhere did the VI Corps reach the main Confederate line. Along most of the

corps' front, no advance of consequence was even attempted. The Confederates were simply too well fortified, and Wright and his field commanders knew it.

* * * *

SMITH'S XVIII CORPS, north of Wright, faced into the concave horseshoe that Kershaw's Confederates had fashioned the previous day to prevent Federals from exploiting the ravine north of Bloody Run. Brigadier General Evander M. Law's Alabamians, reinforced by Brigadier General Goode Bryan's Georgians, held waist-high entrenchments on high ground angling west along the ravine's northern bank. Law had posted artillery along his line and dispatched pickets under Major George W. Cary of the 4th Alabama to patrol well to the front. Law's right hooked onto Tige Anderson's brigade, which extended south to form the base of the rebel pocket. Brigadier General William T. Wofford's Georgia brigade supported Anderson, and Gregg's mixed Texas and Arkansas brigade joined Anderson's right, forming the southern side of the pocket. Smith had expected the Confederates to fortify the ravine, but he had no idea that they had turned the sector into a killing ground. When his soldiers advanced, they would march deep into the declivity formed by the recessed rebel line and receive fire from three directions.

Smith instructed Martindale and Brooks to form their divisions into compact columns, "closed en masse, preceded by a heavy skirmish line and flankers on right flank," and to press ahead "till some strong commanding position is gained." This "column of division" was an exceedingly narrow formation. Thus arrayed, a full-strength regiment would form a mass of troops eighty-two men wide and ten men deep. Colonel Griffin A. Stedman Jr.'s brigade, some 1,800 strong, comprised the front of Martindale's column, and George J. Stannard's brigade of six hundred soldiers formed behind. Brooks posted his division on Martindale's left, Brigadier General Marston's brigade leading, Colonel Guy V. Henry's and Brigadier General Hiram Burnham's brigades bringing up the rear.

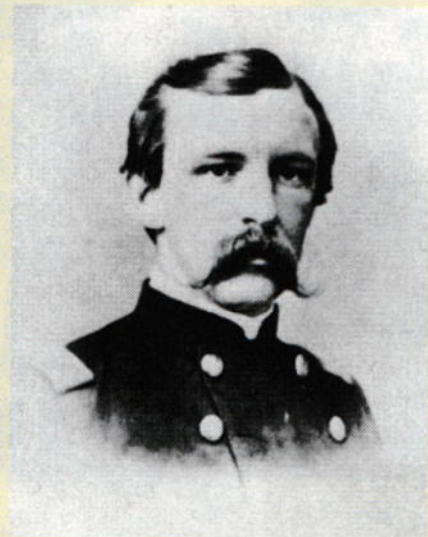
Promptly at 4:30 a.m., Brooks' lead brigade under Marston started off a short distance south of the ravine. Cary's pickets offered token resistance and ran back

to sound the alarm, leaving Marston to march directly into the open jaws of the Confederate horseshoe. "A heavy line of blue was seen emerging from the timber on our right opposite Anderson's Georgians," adjutant Robert T. Coles of the 4th Alabama remembered. "On they came within musket range of General Anderson's front, when a murderous fire was opened by his entire brigade," Coles continued. "Then our brigade and the artillery joined in with a right flank fire, causing the front column to hesitate, thus throwing the rear lines forward in a confused mass." Colonel William C. Oates of the 15th Alabama observed that Confederate artillery, loaded with double charges of canister, "made frightful gaps through the dense mass of men." Marston pulled back to regroup.³¹

Stedman's brigade of Martindale's division stepped off on Marston's right, the twenty-six-year-old Stedman riding gallantly in front, brandishing a ramrod like a sword. Expecting to take the rebel works by storm, he had ordered his troops to remove their percussion caps and to charge with their bayonets fixed. Captain Thomas E. Barker, commanding the 12th New Hampshire, was aghast at the prospect of sending tightly massed troops against the rebel entrenchments. "I tried my best to get Colonel Stedman, commanding column, to deploy [the soldiers in line]," Barker wrote the next day. "He would not allow it but said, 'Go as you are!'" Baldy Smith was at the front to supervise the attack, and the situation troubled him. The VI Corps on Brooks' left had scarcely advanced, leaving Marston's southern flank unprotected, and killing fire from Law's Confederates pelted Marston's right flank as well. Feeding Martindale's two brigades into the maw formed by Kershaw's horseshoe had nothing to recommend it. "It is simply an order to slaughter my best troops," a man in the 27th Massachusetts claimed to have heard Smith say. "I have no discretion left me."³²

To save Marston and salvage what he could from the attack, Smith decided to split Martindale's division, sending Stedman's brigade along the right side of the middle ravine, "faced to the right to protect the right flank of the moving column," and thrusting Stannard's brigade along the ravine's southern margin, moving in tandem with Brooks' brigades on its left. Most importantly, Smith later ex-

plained, "General Martindale was ordered to keep his front covered as much as possible, and to move only when General Brooks moved." After making his instructions clear to Martindale, Smith rode off to inspect Brooks' line.



Roger D. Hunt Collection

Colonel Griffin A. Stedman, Jr.

"Go as you are!"

Hearing musketry to the south, Martindale assumed that Brooks was renewing his attack—an erroneous conjecture, it developed, as the firing came from Neill's feeble probe—and gave the signal to move out. Stedman's brigade passed into the open field, veering northwest as Smith had instructed. Stannard, coming behind, marched along the ravine's southern margin, expecting Brooks to keep apace on his left. The Alabama line erupted in fire—"to those exposed to the full force and fury of that dreadful storm of lead and iron that met the charging column, it seemed more like a volcanic blast than a battle, and was about as destructive," Captain Asa W. Bartlett of the 12th New Hampshire recalled. "We were now so near the breastworks that I could see the flash of their musketry quivering through the bank of smoke that lay above them," recounted George Place of the same regiment. "Men bent down as they went forward, as if trying, as they were, to breast a tempest," remembered Sergeant Piper of Company F. "The files of men went down like rows of blocks or bricks pushed over by striking against each other." Assuming that the soldiers around him were dropping to the ground because of orders that he had missed, Sergeant Tuttle of Company K fell down as well. He did not realize that he was lying among dead men until

he saw living members of the regiment continuing on. Captain Barker, commanding the 12th New Hampshire, also thought that soldiers were lying down to avoid enemy fire and ordered Captain Edwin E. Bedee to get them going. "I soon found," Bedee afterwards told Barker, "that nothing but the judgment trump of the Almighty would ever bring those men upon their feet again." Noted the Alabamian Coles: "Our artillery, giving double shotted canister at not exceeding one hundred yards, did most effective work, while our infantry poured repeated and destructive volleys into the apparently solid mass of blue."

by the pitiless hail," a Federal recalled. Hoping to avoid the fate of the New Hampshire men, they retired to the woods and began digging pits along the tree line.³³

Stannard meanwhile descended into the ravine, apparently hugging the south edge as Martindale had instructed. The 27th Massachusetts fanned out as skirmishers, driving rebels from rifle pits, and the 25th Massachusetts came immediately behind, followed by the 23rd Massachusetts, all marching in a compact "column of division." Through the fog—it was "a dark, gloomy morning," a soldier recalled—Stannard's men could see

wrought, fluttering screams that filled the space with horror, and cries that ran the diapason of terror and despair." Still the Star Brigade advanced, crossing the ravine where the stream made a short jog to the south, and found itself in abandoned rifle pits. There Stannard's men stood face-to-face with the main rebel works lining the brow of a low hill rising some fifteen feet above them. "Great ugly gaps rent in the line were quickly closed by the comrades of the fallen," remembered a man in the 27th Massachusetts.³⁵

The 27th and 25th Massachusetts regiments had separated during the advance, and each now faced different sectors of Law's works. Colonel Josiah Pickett, leading the 25th Massachusetts, waved his sword overhead. "Come on, boys," he shouted. "Forward, double-quick! Charge!" Adjutant Coles of the 4th Alabama watched him approach. "A Federal regiment, entirely alone and unsupported, very suddenly emerged from a ravine on the right front of the position occupied by the 4th Alabama," Coles later wrote. "Their colors flying, the Colonel in command waving his sword and urging his men forward, they advanced directly on the 4th Alabama." Coles and his soldiers admired the courage of these troops—"it appeared to be downright murder to kill men in the performance of an act so courageous," Cole later reflected. But Colonel Pickney D. Bowles, commanding the 4th Alabama, did not hesitate. "When the advancing line reached within seventy yards," he later wrote, "I ordered my line to fire."³⁶

Bryan's Georgians busily loaded muskets and handed them to the Alabamians. "The charging column," Oates of the 15th Alabama wrote, "received the most destructive fire I ever saw. They were subjected to a front and flank fire from infantry, at short range, while my piece of artillery poured double charges of canister into them. I could see the dust fog out of a man's clothing in two or three places at once where as many balls would strike him at the same moment." Samuel H. Putnam of the 25th Massachusetts remembered smoke and flame enveloping the rebel works. "Volley after volley of musketry sent bullets through our ranks like hail," Putnam related. "At the same moment we received an enfilading fire of artillery on both right and left flanks." Colonel Pickett recalled "a storm of bullets, shot, and shell that no human power



Major General William F. "Baldy" Smith (seated)
with his XVIII Corps staff at Cold Harbor.

Half the 12th New Hampshire lay spread across the field in front of the Confederate works. Live soldiers sprawled among dead and wounded comrades, hoping rebels would mistake them for corpses. "Many of the wounded left on the field and unable to get under cover were deliberately shot dead by the inhuman rebel wretches," Captain Bartlett claimed, "and this was done so long after the charge and its excitement were over that every such shot made the one who aimed it little better than a cold-blooded murderer." Bartlett asserted that the Confederates "not only shot at those who showed any signs of life, but amused themselves by making targets of the bodies of those that were dead." Stedman's remaining regiments had watched as the 12th New Hampshire was "thrown back

the profile of the main rebel works. "We calculated the chances, and we felt that they were terribly against us," a Bay State soldier remembered. "But to 'obey orders' is a soldier's duty. 'Wait for a time to die!'"³⁴

As the New Englanders pressed on, rebel artillery opened, enfilading their advance. "Double-shotted rebel guns hurled grape, canister, and shrapnel, and the earth quivered under the mighty shock of battle," a Federal remembered. Then the troops reached musket range. "To the howl and groan of heavy ordnance was added the hum of 'minies' and the t-zip of bullets," a soldier noted. "Then came the dreadful 'Whitworths,' which made the air instinct with warning or quickened it with vivid alarm—long wails that fatefully bemoaned the deaths they

could withstand." A Confederate gunner described the effect of his double shots of canister. "[The Union column] resolved itself into a formless crowd, that stood stubbornly there, but could not get one step farther," he related. "And then, for three or four minutes, at short pistol range, the infantry and our Napoleons tore them to pieces. It was deadly and bloody work! They were a helpless mob now; a swarming multitude of confused men." It seemed to him that the Federals were "simply melting away under the fury of our fire."³⁷

Colonel Pickett of the 25th Massachusetts went down, shot through the hip. Soldiers frantically clawed at the ground, seeking to throw up a measure of protection. Others fell behind the abandoned rebel rifle pits. Sergeant Lewis, carrying the flag noted by Coles—a blue silk banner with the state arms on one side, presented to the regiment by ladies in Worcester—fell wounded. Corporal John E. Lewis caught the flag as it fell and marched on, men falling around him. Marching considerably in advance of the disintegrating line, he, too, was shot and fell clasping the banner. David Casey ran forward, tore the flag from the dead sergeant's grasp, and darted back with it to his regiment.³⁸

The 27th Massachusetts, under Major William A. Walker, pressed its attack with no better success. "Forward, struggling like maddened billows against breakers, mown down by scores," a man in the 27th Massachusetts described the charge. "It was a position trying the stoutest hearts," recollected William P. Derby of the 27th. In a desperate but futile act, the Massachusetts men pressed ahead, but farther advance was impossible. "We couldn't retreat without being killed," recalled a man in the 23rd Massachusetts, which had arrived in time to join the slaughter, "and to stand where we were meant death." To Private Amos Stillman of the 23rd, his jacket perforated by bullet holes, the answer was clear. "Drop, boys," he shouted, and soldiers threw themselves down, seeking shelter in contours of the land. Large numbers also ran the short distance back to the last rifle pits they had crossed. "Midway, between the fire of contending hosts, we crouched behind the captured rifle pits, the air rent with an unearthly contest," a Bay Stater recalled. Law's losses were minor, the main casualty being Law him-

self, who received a severe but not fatal wound just above his eyebrow.³⁹

Stannard's charge was over in minutes. "It became at once evident, in view of the converging fire of musketry and the direct fire of artillery which was cutting down each successive [line] as it rose from the knoll, that it would be impossible for a sufficient number of men to reach the works to produce any effect upon the enemy," wrote Stannard, who had accompanied his brigade. "As no concert of action on the part of other commands was apparent, I ordered the remnant of my command to retire to the rifle pits."

Federals sprawled across the field and huddled against the east side of reversed rebel works. "It was almost impossible to move and live, the lifting of a head or hand being a signal for volleys of musketry," recollected Derby of the 27th Massachusetts. Men worked their bodies into the ground beneath them to gain shelter and stacked corpses as barriers against plunging fire. Looking back, Derby noticed that the "surface of the field seemed like a boiling cauldron, from the incessant pattering and plowing of shot, which raised the dirt in geysers and spitting sands." During a truce a few days later, a rebel major told Major Fish of the 27th Massachusetts, "It was one of the bravest and most useless charges I ever witnessed." Other Confederates thought so as well. "I had seen the dreadful carnage in front of Marye's Hill at Fredericksburg, and on the 'old railroad cut' which Jackson's men held at Second Manassas; but I had seen nothing to exceed this," Law reflected. "It was not war; it was murder."⁴⁰

Appalled at the fire raking Martson's brigade, Smith ordered Brooks "not to move his men farther, but keep them sheltered till the cross-fire was over." Some of Marston's retreating soldiers streamed rearward through Guy Henry's brigade, slated to charge next. Discouraged by Marston's traumatic reverse, Henry advanced three regiments to the first line of captured rebel works and directed the rest of his brigade to lie down. On reaching the front, Major Hiram B. Crosby of the 21st Connecticut found himself "exposed to a sharp fire of shot and shell, both direct and enfilading, from the enemy's works, which were barely two hundred yards distant." Pressed against the ground, the Connecti-

cut men were somewhat protected from the Confederate firepower and took "comparatively light" losses. Henry's sharpshooters fired steadily to keep rebel artillerists from working their guns. "The Union soldiers were lying flat on their faces, hugging their mother earth with ardent affection," a Connecticut man remembered. "Many and many a gallant fellow was shot thus as he lay, hit squarely in the top of the head by a missile whose projectile force would almost carry it lengthwise through his body. Solid shot from an enfilading battery far to the right came crashing through the trees, showing broken limbs and iron fragments upon us." It seemed to one man hunkering low in a captured pit that "all the powers of earth and of hell [were] concentrated in the endeavor to sweep away every vestige of the Federal army."⁴¹

In retrospect, the Union attack at Cold Harbor never had a chance. Writing more than forty years later, the Confederacy's Postmaster General John H. Reagan described a conversation with Lee on the Cold Harbor battlefield on June 3. Lee, Reagan claimed, told him that

Colonel Josiah Pickett (right) recalled "a storm of bullets, shot, and shell that no human power could withstand."

Below: Alfred R. Waud's depiction of Coehorn mortars at Cold Harbor.
Library of Congress.



Grant was hurling columns six to ten men deep against his position. "General, if he breaks your line, what reserves have you?" Reagan inquired. "Not a regiment," Lee is said to have replied. "And that has been my condition since the fighting commenced on the Rappahannock. If I shorten my lines to provide a reserve, he will break them." Lee's alleged remarks to Reagan bore no relation to the actual condition of the Confederate line and if uttered were likely couched to persuade Richmond to send more men. Four brigades from Pickett's and Field's divisions backstopped Hoke's and Kershaw's line across the lower and middle ravines. Far from being hard pressed when Baldy Smith attacked, Law's Alabama troops were "in fine spirits, laughing and talking as they fired," according to Law.

U.S. Army Military Institute, Carlisle, Pa.



Bryan's brigade supported Law, handing the Alabamians loaded muskets; Wofford's and Gregg's brigades supported Tige Anderson; and Clingman's brigade acted as a reserve for Hunton and Hagood. South of Cold Harbor Road, Mahone's entire 3rd Corps division, four brigades strong, waited behind Colquitt and Martin, and Crane's Marylanders stood in reserve behind Edgar's salient. On the Confederate right, adjoining Breckinridge, Wilcox' entire 3rd Corps division was never even engaged. Reagan's postwar remarks notwithstanding, Lee's line at Cold Harbor was strongly reinforced and never in danger of breaking.⁴²

* * * *

THE BIG ASSAULT OF JUNE 3

at Cold Harbor was over in less than an hour. Union commanders had done nothing to enhance their prospects for success, slim as those might have been. Grant deferred command to Meade, Meade made no pretense at leadership at all, and his corps and division heads foundered. Presented with tightly massed targets, the Confederates slaughtered Baldy Smith's soldiers as they came into range, shredding Stedman's, Stannard's, and Marston's narrow columns from front to back much as a sharpener grinds a pencil. Wright never ventured anything resembling an assault. Russell's division stayed put; Ricketts tested the waters with tentative probes, then dug in; and Neill pushed his lead brigade under Wheaton a short distance toward the rebel works and stopped. Hancock, reputedly Meade's best field commander, put in a dismal performance. He could not see Barlow's front from his headquarters near Old Cold Harbor and relied on couriers for information. Although he had posted Birney in reserve to exploit a breakthrough, he did nothing when the 7th New York Heavy Artillery breached Edgar's salient. "We might have held on in Barlow's front had Birney's division moved promptly to its support, which was not done," Hancock's aide Major William G. Mitchell wrote, blaming "great delay occurring on Birney's part or that of his subordinates" for the lapse. Birney, however, could not move until Hancock directed him to do so, and Hancock did not learn of the break in time to send him in. Even the normally aggressive Barlow was

in bad form. When Brooke's attack stalled, Barlow not only failed to order up MacDougal's reserve brigade but also sent his other reserve brigade under Byrnes too far south to assist Brooke. "Our movement was not commanded right and we gained nothing but lost severely," was the verdict of Daniel Chisholm of the 116th Pennsylvania. "I guess we should have acted as a support for [Miles] but some mistake was made through some of the officers."

Grant had envisioned a coordinated offensive by the entire army, but only the II, VI, and XVIII Corps had participated. Even that attack was piecemeal, with well over half the troops available for the assault never seriously engaged. Only seven of Hancock's twelve brigades advanced, and in Wright's corps, only one brigade—Wheaton's—attempted anything remotely resembling an attack. Wright's remaining nine brigades either stayed where they were or pressed forward a few hundred yards and began digging. Baldy Smith's participation was limited to three brigades out of seven. Stories of fields littered with blue-clad corpses convey distorted pictures of what really happened. A few sectors saw tremendous slaughter, but along much of the battle line, Union losses were minor, and many Confederates had no idea that an offensive had been attempted. The popular image of a massive Union attack at Cold Harbor belongs more to the dustbin of Civil War mythology than to real history.

Union casualties have been grossly exaggerated. Commentators have suggested numbers ranging from 7,500 to well above 12,000 casualties, all supposedly incurred during a few terrible minutes after dawn. The 12,000 number comes from the official tally of *all* casualties for the entire Cold Harbor campaign—12,788, to be exact—embracing the cavalry battles of May 31 and June 1, the VI and XVIII Corps attacks at Cold Harbor on June 1, the V and IX Corps fights around Bethesda Church from June 1 forward, and casualties in all Union corps for the remainder of their stay at Cold Harbor and during their movement across the Chickahominy and James Rivers toward Petersburg. The oft-quoted 7,500 figure derives from attempts by early post-war writers to estimate all Union losses for June 3, a day that included a great deal more fighting than just the grand assault.

Precise casualty figures for the June 3 assault are elusive. Some regiments reported losses for the entire day or aggregated figures for several days running. Different computations often appear for a regiment in the official tally, in the regiment's published history, and in handwritten returns at the National Archives. By culling these sources and adjusting them to reconcile reports covering multiple days of fighting, it is possible to arrive at a figure closer to reality than the inflated numbers that have marred histories of the battle almost since the shooting stopped.⁴³

VI Corps losses were minor. Russell's division reported less than a hundred casualties; Neill's approximated 280; and Ricketts' staff recorded 219. All told, the VI Corps lost perhaps six hundred troops on June 3.

On the other hand, the three XVIII Corps brigades that charged into Kershaw's horseshoe were terribly mauled. Martindale reported that his two brigades under Stedman and Stannard entered the fight with some 3,400 soldiers. He counted 1,043 casualties—nearly a third of the men engaged—made up of 98 men killed, 634 wounded, and 311 missing, the latter presumably captured or killed. Stannard's brigade was wrecked, losing by Stannard's reckoning thirty-one commissioned officers, including his entire staff, and 462 enlisted men, for total subtractions of 493. Stedman's brigade also fared badly, losing about 550 troops. Marston's brigade of Brooks' division lost close to five hundred men, bringing XVIII Corps casualties to about 1,500 soldiers.

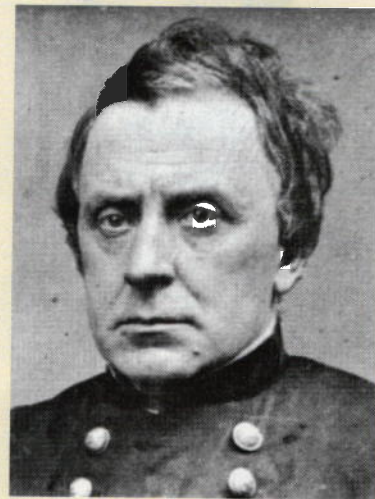
The II Corps staffer Mitchell estimated that Hancock's loss for June 3 exceeded 3,000 soldiers and included "its bravest and best, both of officers and men." The Official Return of Casualties, however, shows that Mitchell's number refers to losses in Barlow's and Gibbon's divisions from June 2 through June 15, a period that included a lot of fighting in addition to the June 3 attack. Meade's chief of staff Major General Andrew A. Humphreys analyzed Hancock's June 3 losses after the war and put them in the range of 2,200 officers and men. Attrition in leadership was severe and included five brigade heads. Regimental heads were cut down at a daunting rate, chief among them McMahon of the 164th New York.

II Corps casualties reflected a prevailing pattern. New regiments lost heavily while veteran regiments, knowledgeable of risks entailed in attacking entrenched positions, generally took only light casualties. The experience of Barlow's division is a case in point. Brooke's brigade spearheaded the attack, and Brooke's first line—comprised solely of the 7th New York Heavy Artillery—lost 422 officers and men. Brooke's six veteran regiments, all in his second line, lost no more than 200 men. In Miles' brigade, the 5th New Hampshire—recently filled with new recruits—led with 202 losses, followed by the novice 2nd New York Heavy Artillery with 91. MacDougall's brigade, in reserve, sustained hardly any casualties, reporting losses from June 2 through June 15 at thirty-five, and Byrnes' five veteran regiments lost only 150 men. Barlow's losses were probably slightly above a thousand, with over half of that total—624—concentrated in two regiments.

Gibbon reported his casualties in the June 3 assault at sixty-five officers and 1,032 men killed and wounded, very close to Barlow's subtractions. Later, in his memoirs, Gibbon raised the number to 1,628, purportedly adding missing men he had neglected to count. His original estimate seems more accurate. Heading the list, of course, was the 8th New York Heavy Artillery with 475 casualties, the highest rate for any regiment in the battle and possibly the highest regimental loss in a single engagement during the entire war. The rest of the Corcoran Legion, which was fairly new to the Potomac army and largely inexperienced in assaulting earthworks, also paid in blood, with the 155th New York reporting over 130 casualties, the 182nd New York, ninety-four, and the 164th New York, 154. In contrast, Smyth's veteran brigade reported only 227 casualties for the entire June 2-15 period. And McKeen's losses were concentrated in the greenhorn 36th Wisconsin, which counted some seventy-eight men killed, wounded, and captured, well over half the brigade's subtractions for June 3. Judging from campaign returns, casualties in Owen's veteran brigade could not have exceeded a hundred men.

The contrast in casualties between Smyth's veterans and the Corcoran Legion's newcomers was striking. The Legion's 164th New York lost some 154 men in a stirring charge led by Colonel

McMahon. Smyth's veteran 14th Connecticut on the 164th New York's immediate left—battle-wise warriors who had been through Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House—charged across comparable ground, quickly grasped the hopelessness of the endeavor, and after "sharp skirmishing" began throwing up earthworks. The 164th New York's pluck earned it an inspirational drawing by the battlefield artist Alfred Waud depicting McMahon, one hand grasping the regimental flag and the other holding his sword high, meeting a hero's death. Waud did not bother to draw the 14th Connecticut digging holes in the ground nearby to protect itself from Confederate fire. These veterans, however, had the satisfaction of losing less than ten men. They did what most veteran regiments did when facing entrenched earthworks at this stage of the war, advancing as far as practical, then entrenching to hold the ground.⁴⁴



Generals in Blue

Brigadier General Marston

Like Colquitt, Marston was a former U.S. congressman who went on to become a U.S. senator after the war.

All told, Hancock's losses on June 3 totaled approximately 2,500. But more than a third of that number—almost 900—came from two regiments, the 7th and 8th New York Heavy Artillery. And five regiments—the 7th and 8th New York Heavy Artillery, the 155th and 164th New York, and the 5th New Hampshire—accounted for over half of Hancock's losses. The total loss in the Corcoran Legion was about nine hundred men, the worst beating sustained by any brigade

that day. Slaughter was confined to discrete sectors, but for the units finding themselves in hot places, June 3 was devastating.

Losses for the day amounted to some 1,500 for the XVIII Corps, at most 2,500 for the II Corps, and probably 600 for the VI Corps, yielding approximately 4,500 men officers and men dead, wounded, and missing. Many casualties, however, occurred after the initial charge was over. Anecdotal accounts suggest that attrition from sharpshooters, artillery fire, and Confederate attacks toward evening may have inflicted up to a quarter of the day's casualties. All things considered, the grand charge at Cold Harbor on June 3 generated perhaps 3,500 Union casualties. The V and IX Corps, which did not participate in the grand assault, lost between 1,200 and 1,400 soldiers on June 3, bringing Union losses for the entire day to approximately 6,000 men. Confederate casualties were disproportionately smaller, with about seven hundred men lost during the early morning attack—the heaviest concentration being at Edgar's salient—and perhaps 1,500 lost from the entire Confederate army during the entire day.⁴⁵

Severe as Grant's losses were on June 3, the two years preceding Cold Harbor had seen a host of days in which Union

and Confederate armies each sustained far more casualties in a single day. Lee's subtractions in three days fighting at Gettysburg, for example, exceeded 22,000, with Confederate losses on the last day of the battle topping 8,000. Pickett's famous charge at Gettysburg—a frontal attack that lasted about as long as Grant's main morning attack at Cold Harbor—cost the Confederates between 5,300 and 5,700 men, a number well in excess of Grant's casualties during his June 3 attack. And while cumulative casualties in Grant's successive battles against Lee were high, no single day of Grant's pounding saw the magnitude of Union casualties that McClellan incurred in one day at Antietam, and no three consecutive days of Grant's warring proved as costly in lives to the Union as Meade's three days at Gettysburg.

Over the years, however, Union participants to a man condemned the spasmodic cluster of disconnected charges early on June 3 that passed for a grand offensive. Tactical problems inherent in coordinating an assault across a six-mile front probably doomed the venture from the outset. The operation, a VI Corps aide asserted, "would have shamed a cadet at his first year at West Point." Smith later opined that Grant's plan of attack—an attack along the whole line—"is de-

nounced by the standard writers on the art of war, and belongs to the first period in history after man had ceased to fight in unorganized masses." Grant agreed that the offensive had been botched. "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made," he wrote from his deathbed. Carefully employing the passive voice, Grant's *mea culpa* leaves future generations to speculate whether the general's regrets were over his decision to attack on June 3 or, more pointedly, over Meade's bungled management of the affair. About the bottom line, however, Grant never equivocated. "No advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained," he wrote.⁴⁶

GORDON C. RHEA is the author of several award-winning books on the Civil War. His latest on the Overland Campaign, *To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13-25, 1864*, won the Civil War Round Table of New York's Fletcher Pratt Award. This article is adapted from a chapter in his upcoming book, *Cold Harbor: Grant and Lee, May 26-June 3, 1864*, to be published by Louisiana State University Press in the summer of 2002. The author expresses his appreciation to Robert E.L. Krick, Todd Berkoff, and Kevin O'Beirne for sharing their thoughts about Cold Harbor with him.

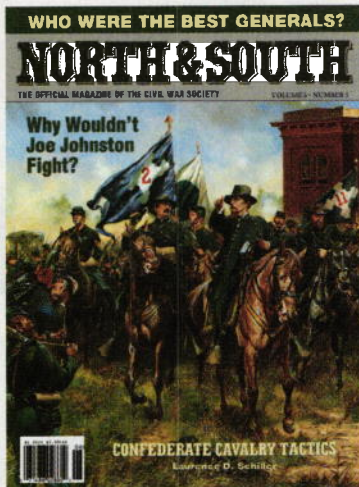
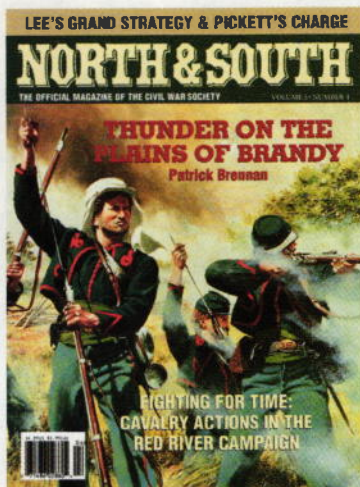
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 43. In estimating Union casualties, I have relied on figures in the Official Reports, in regimental histories, in post-war compilations, and in the handwritten returns in the National Archives, Record Group 94. Even those returns, while helpful, are not definitive. Returns for some units are not extant, and some categories of loss, such as missing soldiers, appear to have been omitted. Union loss figures cited in this article represent simply my best estimates after considering all sources.
 44. I am indebted to Bruce Trinquet of Niantic, Connecticut, for pointing out to me the contrast in losses between these two regiments that charged across comparable ground.
 45. I thank Albert Young for helping me calculate Confederate losses.
 46. Thomas W. Hyde, *Following the Greek Cross; or, Memories of the Sixth Army Corps* (Boston, 1894), p. 211; William F. Smith, "The Eighteenth Corps at Cold Harbor," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 4, p. 225; Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York, 1885), Vol. 2, p. 276. Porter, in his *Campaigning with Grant*, 179, has Grant making a speech to his staff in words almost identical to those Grant used in his *Personal Memoirs* two decades later. One cannot help questioning the authenticity of Porter's reporting.



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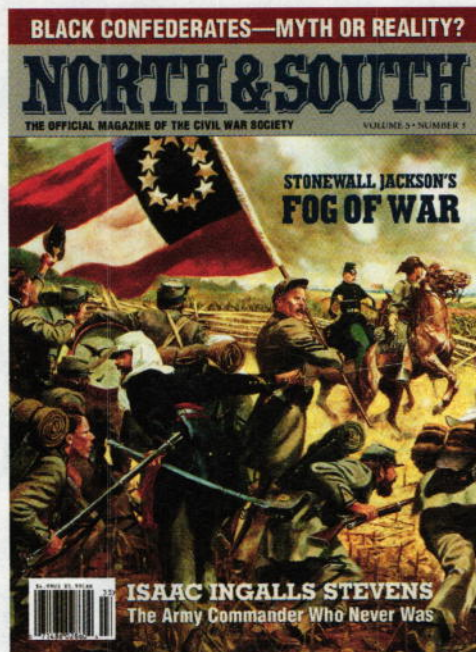
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(Volume 5, #3: mails to subscribers on January 30, 2002; on sale in stores February 20, 2002.)

BLACKS IN GRAY: MYTH OR REALITY? What truth is there in the widespread claims that large numbers of blacks fought for the Confederacy? —Jason Silverman

"THIS SECESSION MOVEMENT MUST BE PUT DOWN WITH AN IRON HAND" The life and death of Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who might—if fate had dealt a different hand—have commanded the Army of the Potomac. —Pat Brennan

STONEWALL'S FOG OF WAR The events of May 24, 1862, were critical for the development of Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign, but at the time they were mired in confusion. —Gary L. Ecelbarger

A TEST OF FAITH In the years 1861-1865 many young Quakers chose to pick up a gun, in defiance of the non-violent teachings of their faith. —Jennifer L. Weber

"A WAR AMONG THEMSELVES" Internecine warfare in southeast Florida. —George E. Buker

"I WOULD WONDER, WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?" An interview with James O. Hall, historical detective extraordinaire. —Kieran McAuliffe

*"It was the greatest fight
I ever witnessed."*



The rear guard action at Samaria Church followed Sheridan's defeat at Trevilian Station, depicted in this painting by James E. Taylor.

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Eric J. Wittenberg

THE CAVALRY FIGHT AT SAMARIA CHURCH

JUNE 24, 1864



After the failure of the Union attack at Cold Harbor on June 3, 1864, General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant decided to disengage his army from that of Robert E. Lee, slip across the James River, and move on Petersburg. If the plan succeeded, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia would be cut off from the Deep South. The move would be screened by the smallest of the Army of the Potomac's three cavalry divisions, that of Brigadier General James H. Wilson. Grant's cavalry chief, Major General Philip H. Sheridan, would meanwhile take his other two divisions on a deep strategic raid. Sheridan was to march west and destroy the Virginia Central Railroad at Charlottesville, Lynchburg, and Gordonsville, and then link up with Major General David Hunter, who had just defeated a scratch Confederate force under Brigadier General William E. "Grumble" Jones at Piedmont, Virginia. The combined force was then to return to the Army of the Potomac, destroying further stretches of railroad en route.¹ If the audacious plan worked, Lee would be cut off not merely from the Deep South, but also from the granary of the Shenandoah Valley. Hemmed in on three sides and without supplies, Lee's army would have to come out and fight on ground of Grant's choosing. The plan was only partially successful. Sheridan's raid did serve as a distraction, drawing off Lee's cavalry, and Grant was able to steal a march on the Confederate commander and move his army across the James. Unfortunately for the Union, Grant's subordinates muffed the attack on Petersburg, and the chance of a swift end to the campaign was lost.

* * *

TACTICALLY, SHERIDAN'S RAID WAS NOT A SUCCESS. The hard service of his May raid on Richmond, the heavy combat at Haw's Shop on May 28, and at Old Church on May 30, had cost his command many of its horses and inflicted heavy casualties on his horse soldiers. Nevertheless the pugnacious thirty-three-year-old Irish bantam took approximately 9,300 cavalrymen and an entire brigade of horse artillery with him, meaning that he had nearly twenty guns at his disposal; even understrength his command remained a powerful force.²

After studying the lay of the land, Sheridan decided to march along the north bank of the North Anna River. He would then cross the river at Carpenter's Ford and strike the Virginia Central at Trevilian Station, six miles west of Louisa Court House. Little Phil intended to destroy the Virginia Central between Louisa and Trevilian Station, march past Gordonsville, strike the railroad again at Cobham's Station, and destroy it from there to Charlottesville. Once he reached Charlottesville, he would link up with Hunter. The march west would cover nearly 100 miles.

Sheridan's two divisions concentrated at New Castle Ferry on June 6, and departed the next morning. Regimental officers received orders to relieve themselves and their men of all unnecessary encumbrances, and all were warned not to expect to find themselves near any depot or safe resting place for as many as twelve days. The Federals departed on June 7.

The next morning the Confederates learned of the raid, and by nightfall two divisions of grayclad cavalry commanded by Major Generals Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee, along with two battalions of horse artillery, were in pursuit. Hampton, the senior division commander, led the expedition. He performed brilliantly, intercepting Sheridan's line of march at

Trevilian Station, and in a grinding two-day battle soundly defeated Sheridan's larger force. Trevilian Station was the largest all-cavalry battle of the Civil War, with over 15,000 horsemen engaged. In those two days, Hampton's two divisions suffered 813 casualties out of 6,700 engaged.



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General Sheridan confers with his cavalry commanders. Seated left to right: Henry Davies, David M. Gregg, James Forsyth (Sheridan's chief-of-staff), and Wesley Merritt. On the ground left to right: James H. Wilson, Alfred Torbert, and Sheridan.

Sheridan utterly failed to fulfill Grant's tactical objectives for the raid. In the process, the two Union divisions lost 1,307 men out of 9,216 engaged. The defeat also left Little Phil with a new problem. He now had hundreds of seriously wounded men to transport and approximately five hundred Confederate prisoners to worry about, necessitating a slow retreat. Sheridan's defeated troopers departed from the area around Trevilian Station about 3:00 a.m. on the morning of June 13, and crossed over the North Anna at Carpenter's Ford. After two long days of intense fighting, the Yankee horse soldiers were tired, and their horses had not had forage for nearly forty-eight hours. A member of the 6th Ohio Cavalry of Brigadier General Henry E. Davies' brigade recalled, "After midnight the withdrawal was skillfully accomplished and with entire secrecy, and a retrograde march commenced, which in some respects was more painful than anything we had before or would hereafter experience."³

The Confederates too had their problems. Both men and horses were prostrated from the gruelling battle, and needed time to recuperate.⁴ As a result, Sheridan's Yankees got a day's head start on Hampton. The Confederates did not catch up until June 21, and Hampton's best opportunity to destroy Sheridan's command slipped away as a result of the wretched condition of his command. "As [Sheridan] had a pontoon train with him which enabled him to cross the river at any point, I was forced to keep on the south of the rivers, so as to interpose my command between him and Grant's army, which he was seeking to rejoin," reported Hampton. "During several days while we marched on parallel lines I constantly offered battle, which he studiously declined."⁵

On the night of the 18th, Sheridan finally made contact with the Army of the Potomac. He received orders to march fifteen miles to White House Landing, oversee the dismantling of the supply base there, and escort its garrison and equipment to the new supply base at Harrison's Landing on the James. Finally, on the 19th the weary Yankee troopers spotted the welcome sight of the Stars and Stripes waving over the depot at White House Landing.

On the 21st Hampton attacked White House Landing and Sheridan sent his two divisions out to contest him. Colonel Thomas C. Devin's First Division brigade engaged the enemy near St. Peter's Church, the site of George Washington's wedding, and a spirited fight ensued. Sheridan's other four brigades also committed to the fight, with many of them engaging the Confederates nearly all day. At dusk Hampton withdrew, having suffered thirty casualties.



U.S. Army Military History Institute

Major Generals Wade Hampton (left) and Fitzhugh Lee.

Both Confederate division commanders at Samaria Church went on after the war to become governors of their respective states. Hampton was perhaps the ablest cavalry commander produced by the Army of Northern Virginia.

On the 22nd both sides enjoyed their first complete day of rest in two weeks, the troopers spending a pleasant day resting, bathing, and caring for their horses. Many found their first opportunity in weeks to let their loved ones know that they were all right. Sheridan's column advanced again on June 23, this time with nearly 1,000 wagons and a brigade of infantry swelling its ranks. The long, ponderous column snaked slowly across the countryside, aiming for Charles City Court House on the James. Strung out it made a line ten miles long and made a very tempting target for Hampton.

Hampton's troopers buzzed around the edges of the column. Reinforced by Brigadier General John Chambliss' brigade of Major General W.H.F. Lee's division and Brigadier General Martin W. Gary's independent cavalry brigade, Hampton was looking for an opportunity to fall upon the train. On the 23rd, the two forces briefly clashed near Nance's Shop, six miles north of Charles City Court House. The troopers of Colonel Thomas C. Devin's brigade of the First Cavalry Division held their ground after a spirited engagement, finally driving off Chambliss' men. Major General David M. Gregg's Second Division occupied the area around Nance's Shop, guarding the

rear of the wagon train. When Gary's independent brigade arrived, Hampton detached Brigadier General Lunsford L. Lomax's brigade and sent it in against Gregg's men, in one more desperate effort to destroy the wagon train. However, Devin's 9th New York charged the Virginians and drove them for nearly a mile and a half. Lomax frowned as he watched the opportunity to bag the vast Federal wagon train slip through his fingers; retiring, his men took up positions for the night behind a crude breastwork.

Hampton planned to go into battle the next day with six full brigades of cavalry. Although the big South Carolinian did not know it, the arrival of Sheridan's wagon train and the First Division at Wilcox's Landing left Gregg's Second Division alone and unsupported. Davies' brigade, Sheridan's rear guard, was especially vulnerable. Sheridan communicated with Gregg around 10:00 that morning, "There is some skirmishing in front of Charles City Court House, on road to Harrison's Landing.... I am now moving the infantry down, and will move Torbert's division. Look out for Davies. Support him if necessary."⁶ Hampton's force waited to pounce on Gregg's division, still maintaining its lonely vigil guarding Sheridan's flank near Samaria (St. Mary's) Church.

The area surrounding Samaria Church is mostly flat, with gentle folds in the terrain. Samaria Church sits about three and one-half miles south of Long Bridge over the Chickahominy River and on, or very near, an imaginary line drawn between White House Landing on the Pamunkey and Harrison's Landing on the James River, about twenty miles from Richmond. Salem Church sat about a mile and a half to the southwest of Samaria Church, and served as Hampton's headquarters. The Confederates held a line along a low ridge, on a north-south axis, anchored at one end by Salem Church and by Nance's Shop on the other. Chambliss' brigade held the northern end of the line, near Nance's Shop; the brigades of Butler, Dulany, Wright, and Wickham held the southern end, with the 12th and 24th Virginia, Phillips Legion, and Jeff Davis Legion in reserve. Gary's brigade would march around the Union right flank.

General Gregg knew that Hampton's force outnumbered his veteran Second Division. Several miles separated his two brigades from the First Division, which was camped near Charles City Court House. Gregg probably knew that Sheridan could not support him if he got into trouble. One of Gregg's tired troopers colorfully wrote, "Since starting on the Trevilian Raid, June 7, we had been living chiefly on horse hair, dust and hotness, and while we didn't complain of it as food to fight upon, we did not consider it as composed of material which would produce corpulency, and most of the men had buttoned the front lapel of their pantaloons around onto their back suspender buttons, as a necessary precaution against falling through them when they dismounted."⁷

At 8:00 on the morning of June 24, with the weather already uncomfortably hot and dry, Gregg advanced to Samaria Church. His men joined the 6th Ohio Cavalry, which was already skirmishing with the enemy troopers in the fields around the church. Arriving at Samaria Church, Gregg sent the 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry to engage a small force of Hampton's pick-

ets. They drove the Confederates for nearly a mile before breaking off.

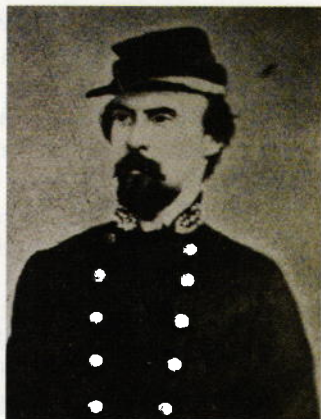
Elements of the 1st Maine Cavalry also engaged the Confederate pickets, driving them off with a single volley. The Maine men pursued them as far as Samaria Church, where they halted and formed a defensive position. They found Confederate campfires still burning and cooking utensils scattered in confusion by the fleeing Southerners. The 1st Maine's position was directly across the road, making it the hardest place to defend in the event of an attack.

Gregg deployed his cousin's brigade north of Samaria Church and Davies' brigade to the south.

His line faced west and parallel to Hampton's. He deployed the batteries of Captain Alanson M. Randol and Lieutenant William Dennison in commanding positions behind his main line of battle. His flank was in the air, with a wide, open field in front, and heavy woods behind. Gregg's blueclad troopers held the main road to Charles City Court House at a junction in front of the church critical to protecting Sheridan's flanks and the long wagon train. The deploying Yankees knew that the Confederates had not gone far, and could hear them moving about in the woods as they prepared to attack. As the occasional picket fire continued, orders reached the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry to go to Wilcox's Landing to look for signs of Sheridan's train there. After making the ten mile ride in about an hour, the 1st Massachusetts found the train. At around 10.00 a.m. the regimental commander, Colonel Samuel E. Chamberlain, reported to Sheridan, who informed him that the wagon train had arrived safely and instructed him to return to Samaria Church with orders for Gregg to retire.⁸

For several hours, Gregg's division traded potshots with Hampton's men all along the line. Davies' brigade held an open space on slightly rising ground. A shabby little house occupied by an invalid, his wife, and several children stood at the center of Davies' line; when picket fire broke out, the family sought shelter in their basement, only emerging when the fighting finally ended well after dark. Gregg knew that a large force of the enemy had passed by St. Mary's Church the evening before, moving toward Haxall's Landing. Aware that he was unsupported, Gregg made ready to resist an attack of the enemy should it be made, throwing up strong works of logs, rails, and felled trees along his line of battle.

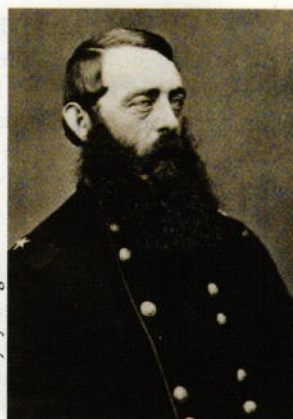
As the men exchanged skirmish fire, Butler reconnoitered Gregg's position. Noting that heavy woods and a fence line surrounded Gregg, Butler concluded that a direct assault would lead to heavy losses. He suggested a flanking attack on the right end of Gregg's line, just to the north of Samaria Church. The attack would "strike Gregg a fatal blow without a great loss to our side." While Butler awaited a response from Hampton, Fitz Lee rode up to Butler's headquarters. When Butler informed Lee that Gregg had an exposed flank, Lee sent an aide to ask Hampton for permission to take command of the field. Hamp-



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Brigadier General John Chambliss (left). Less than two months after the Battle of Samaria Church, Chambliss was killed in a clash with Union troops on the Charles City Road.

Brigadier Henry E. Davies (center). Acting as rear guard, Davies' brigade was especially vulnerable. Major General David McMurtrie Gregg (right) was praised by Sheridan for the way in which he protected the wagon train against heavy odds.

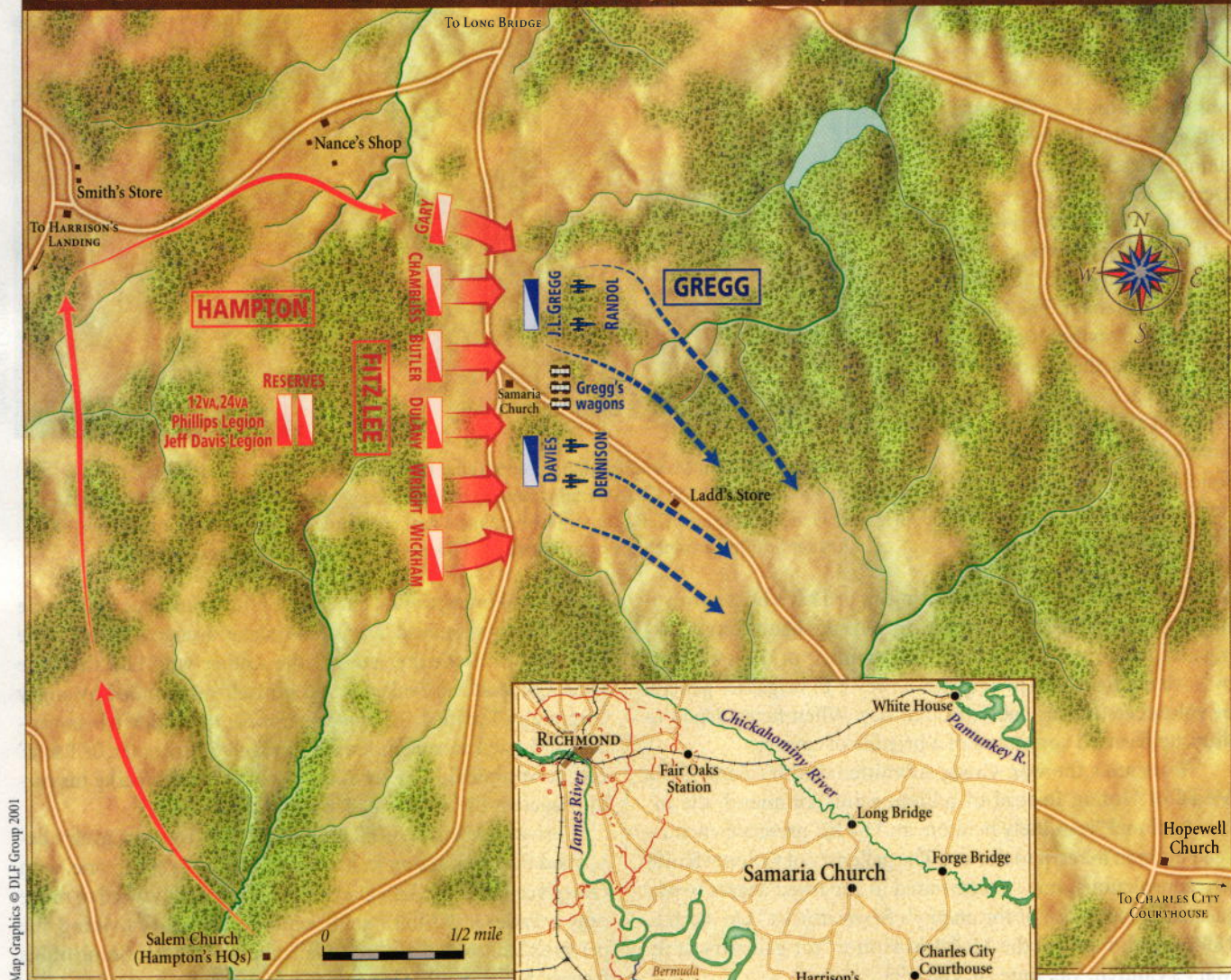
ton granted the request and instructed Butler to take orders from Lee.

Hampton was preparing an all-out assault on the outnumbered Federals, and sent Gary's brigade on a march from Salem Church to Nance's Shop, with orders to attack Gregg's flank as soon as the main assault began. Two regiments of Gary's brigade, the Hampton Legion and the 7th South Carolina, marched to Smith's Store, turned northeast, and deployed in line of battle in the fields surrounding Nance's Shop. Gary's other regiment, the 24th Virginia, remained in reserve, along with the Jeff Davis Legion, Phillips Legion, and the 12th Virginia. A significant swale and a heavy stand of pine trees separated the shop and Gregg's line, and Gary's horse soldiers were able to move into position to assault Irvin Gregg's flank without being detected.

Around 3:00 Gregg received Sheridan's order to withdraw. But it was too late, for at that moment Gary's dismounted troopers swept forward. The Rebel yell—a chilling cry intended to impress upon the Yankees that the Confederates meant business—rang out, as the South Carolinians rushed toward Irvin Gregg's exposed right flank. The Confederate skirmish line had barely moved out before Gregg's determined Yankees unleashed a volley. As the Southerners pressed on, the firing grew more intense, until the two lines stood only sixty or seventy paces apart, blasting away at each other. Soon, clouds of acrid smoke obscured the Northerners as they fired from behind their barricade.

Private Nathan Webb of the 1st Maine Cavalry watched the solid gray line moving toward his hastily constructed works. "Instantly all our men were on their feet and everybody alert. As for myself, I confess my heart was in my mouth," recorded Webb. Trying to keep from panicking, the young Maine trooper envisioned watching the enemy fall back, repulsed from the strong Northern position. His mind's eye chose success over the less attractive alternative. "But in spite of me," he admitted, "I thought of home and possible wounds."⁹

As Gary's men became engaged, Fitz Lee committed Brigadier General Williams C. Wickham's brigade of Virginians to the fight. Wickham's brigade connected with Gary's and the two brigades moved against the northern end of the Union line.



Initially repulsed, Wickham's Virginians fell back and regrouped, then charged again across the open field into the murderous fire of Gregg's Spencers. Soon only the Federal works separated the two forces, and the fight raged at such close quarters that the combatants could make out each other's facial features. Colonel Thomas T. Munford's 2nd Virginia Cavalry also advanced rapidly across the open field toward Gregg's line, while Colonel Richard H. Dulany's Laurel Brigade attacked the extreme left of Gregg's works, losing eight men wounded. A severe firefight raged, with the Confederates charging "in the face of a very heavy fire of artillery and musketry, and it was most handsomely accomplished."¹⁰ Unleashing volley after volley, the determined Virginians shattered Gregg's initial position, driving the Federals from the breastworks.

Soon the entire Second Division was under severe pressure. The 1st Massachusetts arrived just as Hampton's attack jumped off. The Bay Staters were sent at a gallop into the line, and found every regiment already fighting dismounted and heavily engaged. One of the newcomers, Private Giles Taylor of the 1st Massachusetts, turned to Stanton P. Allen and remarked, "I wish I had enlisted in the infantry."

"Why so?" inquired Allen.

"Because the doughboys don't have to stay up all night doctoring sick horses, and then fight on foot, and have their

horses led off so far that if they get whipped they can't

use them to run away with. Here's the whole Southern Confederacy coming down on our one little division, and the general has had our horses taken so far to the rear that we never can reach them if we are obliged to get out of this. This is going to be a worse place than the Wilderness," predicted Taylor.

"Well," replied a resigned Allen, "they can't kill us but once." As he watched the Rebel advance bearing down on their position, Taylor groaned, "But I'd rather be killed in an open field, on horseback, than to be sabred to death behind a fence."¹¹

Gregg's determined horsemen repulsed numerous attacks, holding their ground in the face of mounting pressure. "The rebel troopers needed but one volley at close range to convince them that they had a bigger job on hand than they had bargained for," observed Allen. "The first assault was repulsed all along our front, and the attack on our left flank by the brigades of Chambliss and Gary did not succeed in breaking Gregg's lines. The Federal troopers cheered as the rebels withdrew to prepare for a renewal of the onslaught."¹² It soon came, and Gregg's proud veterans again repulsed the Confederates. The Yankee troopers knew that they would not have long to wait for a third assault. They saw the grayclad horsemen forming for another attack and grimly hung on.

Colonel Charles H. Smith of the 1st Maine, a thirty-seven-year-old school teacher, was shot in the leg. The same ball also killed his horse. His demoralized men fell back. Despite the painful wound, Smith refused to leave the field and rallied his troopers, who gave three cheers for their injured commander. The Maine men turned on the enemy and made a stand, the tide of battle flowing back and forth. They repulsed three attacks before finally being driven from the field by the ferocity of the Southern attack. In the closing moments of the fight, the colonel lost a second horse

shot out from under him. Mounting an orderly's horse, the injured colonel rallied his troopers, preventing them from breaking and running. Smith was the last member of the 1st Maine to leave the field, and he received a brevet to brigadier general of volunteers for his gallantry that day. When he returned to duty, he received command of a brigade of cavalry.

Years after the war, Gregg submitted Smith's name for a Medal of Honor. Instead of relinquishing command, the injured colonel "resolutely held on, and by his presence encouraged his men to resist to the last. The gallantry of Colonel Smith was conspicuous, and... contributed in a marked degree to our successful resistance of the enemy's fierce attacks." On April 6, 1895, Smith received the Medal of Honor "for gallantry at St. Mary's Church, Va., June 24, 1864."¹³

With Hampton, Fitz Lee, Chambliss and Butler driving their men on, the Confederates fought savagely, clubbing their muskets. "The train! The train! is their rallying cry," observed a Maine sergeant. The two forces came together like battering rams, backed off, and then went at each other again and again.¹⁴

The 2nd Virginia Cavalry attacked dismounted, driving a group of Federals from their breastworks. These Union men supported a battery perched atop a nearby knoll. Pursuing them, the Virginians watched their blueclad quarries seeking refuge among some nearby farm buildings. The Northerners shot at their pursuers through the cracks of a log home. Their fire caused no casualties among the pursuers, who flanked the position, swinging around the barn. When the Northerners realized that they had been flanked, about twenty-five of them tried to escape through a solid plank gate. However, the gate opened in instead of out, and a bottleneck developed. The surging Confederates demanded the surrender of the desperate Yankee troopers, but Gregg's men responded by opening fire. The Confederates then charged the artillery position, but the guns had already limbered up and withdrawn. The only loss sustained by the Virginians was Captain Willoughby W. Tebbs of Company K, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, who was decapitated by an artillery shell that fell from a tree and burst.

Lieutenant J. Lucius Davis, son of the commanding officer of the 10th Virginia Cavalry of Chambliss' brigade, jumped atop



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Captain Alanson M. Randol (left), commander of a battery of Union horse artillery. Lieutenant Colonel Samuel E. Chamberlain (center) brought Gregg orders to retire, but it was too late. Brigadier General Matthew C. Butler (right) had lost a foot at Brandy Station, was the son-in-law of former South Carolina governor Francis W. Pickens, and had "a good eye for terrain."

the Federal breastworks, cheering on his comrades, only to be immediately shot dead. Davis was quickly avenged, though. The pursuing Confederates cut off the soldier who had fired the fatal shot, and the Yankee found himself surrounded by angry Virginians. Terrified, the blueclad trooper threw down his weapons and tried to surrender. An enraged Southerner of Davis' company replied, "I never take prisoners," and, placing his carbine against the man's head, blew his brains out.¹⁵

Private Dewitt C. Gallagher of the 1st Virginia Cavalry described the day's action in his diary: "Fight—a sharp one, with Gregg's cavalry." As Gallagher and his comrades waited to move out, a Federal artillery shell exploded nearby, striking the private's left boot. Staggered, Gallagher nearly fell. Some of his friends, believing that his ankle had been broken, tried to carry him from the field. Gallagher refused and joined the attack, hobbling across the open fields. He noted, "I got close up to a General, or a bunch of officers, trying to rally their fleeing men and took deliberate aim at him and can never understand why he did not fall as he galloped away. He may have been only wounded."¹⁶

Colonel Pennock Huey mounted his 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry and charged, driving the Confederates back toward the woods behind Nance's Shop. Huey saved Randol's guns from capture by the onrushing Southern horsemen. The Pennsylvanians then dismounted and fought on foot until a Confederate rally forced them to fall back. Many of the onrushing Southerners fell within a few feet of the Union breastworks, and some fell atop them. With the fight raging, Gregg's two batteries pitched load after load of canister into the Southern ranks. The determined Confederates pressed on, looking to break Gregg's line.

The ferocity of Hampton's attack drove the men of the 10th New York from their initial position; they fell back and hastily threw up crude breastworks along the edge of a field. The New Yorkers were soon forced to abandon this position too, and retreated another 150 yards to a natural entrenchment formed by a ditch. They tore down a fence and placed the planks across the top of the trench, to strengthen the position. The Confederates fired volley after volley from the woods,



Brigadier General Martin W. Gary (left): Gary's men moved into position on the Union flank without being detected. Brigadier Williams C. Wickham (center): Wickham's men charged straight into the murderous fire of Irvin Gregg's Spencers. Colonel Richard H. Dulany (right): Dulany's Laurel Brigade attacked the extreme left of Gregg's works.

and then pushed forward their line of battle, the Rebel yell ringing out again. Captain George Vanderbilt of the 10th New York ordered his men to hold their fire until the enemy was within fifty feet of the Federal line of battle. The Yankee troopers then unloosed such a heavy fire with their carbines and revolvers that the Confederate attack broke and fell back to the cover of the woods. The beleaguered 10th New Yorkers now came under fire from their own artillery bursting overhead, but nevertheless repulsed a second attack, grayclad casualties piling up in front of the trench.

As the New Yorkers ran low on ammunition, Captain Vanderbilt sent back for more, but was told none could be spared. A sergeant asked permission to try again. Vanderbilt sought to discourage the man, telling him that he did not believe he would come back alive. Undeterred, the sergeant replied, "Captain, I know it's risky, but I'll chance it." He soon returned with a small supply of ammunition, which he quickly distributed. A Rebel bullet had ruined his hat, another had passed through his coat sleeve, a third had cut holes in his clothing, and a fourth had punched a hole in his canteen.¹⁷

Another member of the 10th New York, Private Edmund M. Tuton of Company E, watched the Confederate wave crash into the flimsy rail barricade. An enemy ball struck him in the left breast, hitting just to the left of the buttons on his tunic, but the fierce fighting left no time to investigate the extent of the harm. Instead, he emptied his Spencer at the attacking Rebels, at one point his carbine growing so hot that the weapon discharged when he drew the lever block up to its place in the breech. With nearly a dozen Rebels just a few feet away, and with many more advancing, Tuton discharged his carbine randomly and beat a hasty retreat.

Although the Northern cavalrymen continued to fend off the fierce Confederate attacks, they were badly outnumbered and realized it was only a matter of time before they would have to withdraw. "As fast as one [enemy] line fell back before the carbines of the cavalry and the terrible canister of Dennison and Randol, a fresh line pushed forward to take their place," observed the regimental historian of the 1st New Jersey Cavalry, "and slowly, with unbroken formation, our men began to

retire across the open ground." Through the fusillade of fire the men of the 6th Ohio Cavalry sat their horses, sabres drawn, protecting the guns of Randol's battery from the dashes of the Confederates.¹⁸

The 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry, supporting Denison's battery, dismounted and advanced to a nearby knoll that covered both the battery and the flank. Arriving there just before the Confederates, they were joined by the 6th Ohio. Holding a position atop the low ridge, the two regiments opened a withering fire on the advancing Confederates. The Pennsylvanians and Ohioans held the attackers off with accurate fire until

they saw that the bulk of Davies' brigade and Randol's battery had passed safely to the rear, then abandoned their strongpoint atop the knoll, and slipped through the woods to rejoin the rest of their division.

The withdrawal of the Pennsylvanians uncovered the right flank of Denison's battery, and one of Gregg's aides rode up to Denison, crying, "Take care! They will get your guns!"

"Take my battery!" responded the artillerist. "They cannot take my battery. No rebels on that field can take my battery!" He continued blasting away at the advancing grayclad troopers until he had depleted his ammunition.

With his line crumbling, Gregg realized that he faced disaster unless he ordered a general retreat. As a first step he sent his horses, wounded men who had means of transportation, and caissons down the road to Charles City Court House. The bulk of the command then followed, the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry bringing up the rear and fighting a delaying action as it fell back. "As we came out of a wood, the Col...with the 1st Squadron faces the charging enemy and they pour volleys into them—thus retarding them," recounted Lieutenant Samuel Cormany, "and while I rallied my squadron some distance in the rear or rearward on the opposite side of the road—on an elevation." As Cormany's men rallied, they lustily sang a popular marching song "We'll Rally Round the Flag, Boys." Others, routed and without leadership or organization, fell in with Cormany's squadron, forming a solid front. Cormany told his motley command that they could expect the rest of the regiment to come flying back at any moment, and that they should await his orders before opening fire. Once he gave the order to fire, the men were to "pour it in with precision—and continuously, until the Reg't had time to form further back on our right and rear."

He did not have long to wait. Soon, the balance of the regiment fell back, Lieutenant Colonel John K. Robison calling for them to remain steady as they passed Cormany's position. The heavy dust and smoke from the black powder of the carbines and rifles blinded Cormany's men, who could not see the enemy's advance until it was within one hundred yards of their position. The order to fire was given, and "such a volley

greeted them as checked them all and dismounted many—and the same was repeated several times, when an effort to flank us made it necessary for us to ‘By fours, right about face’ and move to the rear steadily, firing occasionally to the rear or ‘rear-right-oblique.’” Soon, they had reached the next position held by the rest of the regiment, and Cormany’s men dropped back. Retreating by echelon, the hard-pressed Pennsylvanians held the enemy until nightfall.¹⁹

Fortunately, the heavy woods provided some protection from the pursuing Rebels. Not all of the Federals remembered it as an orderly withdrawal. “Our men on the line were out of ammunition, and in ten minutes the whole line was on the skedaddle. The batteries’ ammunition soon gave out, too, and we were seven miles from our trains, and there was nothing to do but run for it. We saved the guns with difficulty.... We were the last off the field, and I think it was as hot a place as I ever got into,” recalled an officer of the 1st Massachusetts. More than thirty of the Bay Staters were captured.²⁰

Colonel Richard L. T. Beale commanded the 9th Virginia Cavalry. The elder Beale, swept up in the pursuit of the fleeing Yankees, ran as far as he could. However, he soon collapsed beside the road, “overcome with heat and thirst, but he was making a tremendous noise yelling to the men *to go ahead!*” Colonel Beale recuperated quickly and resumed command of his regiment that evening. He greatly lamented the lack of a general pursuit.

The extreme heat prostrated a number of Gregg’s men and even produced some deaths as the Northerners fled toward the safety of the large Union bases along the James River. Gregg tried to rally his troops and to prevent them from fleeing in panic, as the victorious Confederates pressed their pursuit. He succeeded in rallying enough of his men at Hopewell Church to present a strong line of battle, and faced with heavy fire the Confederates paused to reform their lines. Hampton sent several regiments forward under cover of the woods, and their flank attack forced Gregg’s men to withdraw from their barricades and mount up in order to escape. The road to Charles City Court House—jammed by led horses, artillery, pack mules, and panicked mounted and dismounted men—became the scene of a cacophony of shouting and cursing.

As the fighting raged, Gregg sent couriers with a request for reinforcements. However, all of them were captured. This not only meant that Gregg got no support from the First Division, it also revealed to the Confederates the full extent of his plight. For some reason the sounds of battle did not reach Sheridan’s headquarters, and he remained in ignorance of the intense battle raging just a few miles away.



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Courtesy the Kiefer Family

Colonel Charles H. Smith (left). Despite being painfully wounded in the leg, Smith refused to leave the battlefield. A school teacher before the war, Smith was a natural warrior who found his true calling in the cauldron of combat. Colonel Pennock Huey (center) led a mounted charge to save Randol’s guns. Lieutenant Samuel Cormany (right), 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry. The men of Cormany’s squadron sang “We’ll Rally Round The Flag,” as they held off the pursuing rebels.*

Gregg and his staff officers and orderlies joined the rear guard, controlling the pace of the retreat as well as possible. At one point, Gregg dismounted beside a mortally wounded Union officer, and the advancing enemy nearly captured the inattentive division commander. Gregg’s assistant adjutant general, Captain Henry C. Weir, alerted Gregg to the imminent danger, inducing Gregg to mount and ride off just in time to avoid capture. Weir wheeled and faced the enemy, and opening fire with his revolver, delayed the pursuit. Weir then mounted his horse and rejoined his comrades.

As the retreat milled back a fellow staff officer fell beside Weir in the melee. “Who did that?” asked Weir, pulling up his horse and wheeling around. An orderly pointed out the Rebel officer who had fired the shot. “The next moment Weir was among the enemy, and had blown out the rebel’s brains. Then, with the same suddenness, he dashed back to our line.” Weir gave his horse to the wounded officer and rallied some of the dismounted troopers. Armed with only his revolver, the heroic captain helped fend off the last charges of Hampton’s men before they called off the pursuit.

Gregg later praised Weir’s “great daring and love of fighting... he was always seeking opportunity to be in the midst of the severest fighting.” He also commented that when Weir was caught up in the maelstrom of the rout on June 24 and did not turn up at divisional headquarters immediately, “I concluded that he had been killed or captured.” Colonel J.P. Taylor of the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry, Weir’s former regiment, wrote, “I feel sir if there is a soldier in the Army of the Potomac worthy of a Medal it is... H. C. Weir.” Weir received a brevet major for conspicuous gallantry and meritorious service in August 1864, and was awarded the Medal of Honor in May 1899 for his valor at Samaria Church.²¹

In truth it was a most disorderly retreat, and if the rebels had been able to push harder they might well have gobbled up the whole division. Many of Gregg’s mounts were killed,

* ED.: Cormany’s wife, Rachel, is pictured in the article “A Regular Slave Hunt,” in *North & South*, Volume 4, #7 (September 2001).



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Captain Henry C. Weir (left). Weir's Medal of Honor citation reads: "On this occasion the Division being hard pressed and falling back, this officer dismounted, gave his horse to a wounded officer, thus enabling him to escape, and afterward, on foot, rallied and took command of some stragglers and, with pistol in hand, helped to repel the last charges of the enemy." Colonel George H.

Covode (right), 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Son of a radical congressman, Covode told his captors, shortly before he died, "I have done nothing dishonorable on this raid."

creating a mass of stragglers who might have been snapped up by an aggressive pursuit. Yet the pursuit too became chaotic. In one charge, a Southern horse soldier, believing this his comrades were close behind, rode right up to General Davies and a group of his officers. When Davies asked the man who he was, the man realized that he was all alone, and promptly surrendered.

Hampton committed his reserve, the 12th and 24th Virginia and the Phillips and Jeff Davis legions, to the fight. Crying, "The wagons! The wagons!" these units drew sabres and charged after the fugitives. Among the pursuers was Lieutenant George Baylor of the 12th Virginia Cavalry. Riding alongside his commanding officer, Colonel Thomas B. Massie, Baylor saw the colonel receive a serious wound. Then suddenly a spent ball struck Baylor in the chest. Fortunately for him he wore a badge of the Union Philosophical Society of his alma mater, Dickinson College, on his breast. The badge was a Maltese cross, surmounted with a shield. The spent ball tore off the shield and bent the cross. Baylor's imagination played havoc with him and he believed himself mortally wounded. He thought that he could feel daylight passing through him and that blood ran down his front, leaving him gasping for breath.

One of his men, trooper John Terrill, riding near the lieutenant, noticed Baylor's pallor and peculiar behavior and jumped to the conclusion that his company commander had been mortally wounded. Leading Baylor's horse back over a small declivity, out of the range of more flying missiles, Terrill pulled open Baylor's jacket and shirt and proclaimed, "Lieutenant, you are not much hurt, the ball hasn't gone in!" Terrill pulled the ball free with his finger and held it up for Baylor to see, and Baylor, making a sudden and miraculous recovery, rejoined the pursuit.²²

Private Dewitt C. Gallagher of the 1st Virginia Cavalry, who had chased the fleeing Yankees on foot for three or four miles, collapsed with exhaustion. He noted in his diary, "I was never

so tired in my life carrying my carbine pistol and ammunition, but the excitement kept me up.... Oh How glad I was to again mount my faithful horse and go into camp for the night!" The excitement of the pursuit spurred the weary Southerners to forget their fatigue and hunger, and they chased the defeated Yankees for more than three miles before finally giving up the chase.²³

Many of the exhausted Federal troopers, who had had no water all day, and who had fought for hours, collapsed by the wayside in the intense heat and were captured by the pursuing rebels. And Gregg had to leave most of his dead and wounded behind due to lack of transportation. Gloating, one of the Richmond newspapers reported, "We felt sorry for when we saw wounded horses lying on the field—for the horse is a noble animal—but the cries of Sheridan's thieves and house burners was music to our ears, and we saw with satisfaction that many of these plunderers had met their just dues for their many outrages."²⁴ Most of the wounded Federals were left in the hands of the local populace. When the Southerners withdrew, the returning Union troopers recovered many of the bodies.

Those who did escape arrived at the Court House and rallied just outside the town. Northern officers cobbled together a line of battle, and all around could be heard cries like, "This way, 1st Maine," "Here you are, 8th Pennsylvania," or "1st New Jersey here." An officer of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry recalled, "Hampton drove us until it got dark, when he stopped, and we tried to get some order into the division. In the confusion the men had got away from their regiments and in the darkness everybody camped where he found himself, and waited for daylight to put things to rights. Some of the 10th New York went to the river before stopping."²⁵

Men straggled into camp near Charles City Court House almost all night. All told, Gregg's division suffered 357 commissioned officers and enlisted men killed, wounded and captured. The Confederates surrounded and captured Colonel Huey and a few men he had rallied. One of the Richmond papers reported finding thirty dead Yankees clumped together on one portion of the battlefield. The 1st Maine, which bore the brunt of the fighting, went into battle that day with approximately 260 officers and men and lost 10 officers and 56 enlisted men killed, wounded or captured, for 26% losses, a staggering toll, particularly considering the short duration of the fight. In this brief engagement Gregg's division suffered heavier casualties than had Sheridan's entire command on the second day at Trevilian Station.

Among the dead was Lieutenant Colonel George H. Covode of the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry, mortally wounded while leading his regiment. As the Confederates pursued Gregg's precipitous retreat, Butler and his staff trotted along behind. The general spotted a large man with long red sideburns lying by the roadside on an improvised stretcher made up of an army blanket with two poles on either end. Butler halted, and when Covode learned the identity of his caller, said, "This is the fate of Sheridan's raiders, but, General, I have the consolation of knowing that I have done nothing dishonorable on this raid."

Butler responded, "However that may be, sir, I certainly would not remind you of it under present conditions," and inquired as to how badly hurt the Pennsylvanian was. Covode replied, "Yes, my left arm is shattered, and our litter bearers

dropped me here when your cavalry charged and overtook us." Butler took pity on the injured man, sending Dr. B.W. Taylor, chief surgeon of Hampton's division, to bring some apple brandy to Covode. Taylor examined Covode and found that he had also been shot in the back. Covode died a little while later in a Confederate field hospital at Samaria Church, and was buried near Samaria Church in an unmarked grave.²⁶

The victorious Confederates roamed the field looking for prizes of war, and then camped near Salem Church. When they finally called off the pursuit, the exhausted Confederates dropped on the ground and fell sound asleep. One of the South Carolinians, worn out from the day's action, curled up next to a log and soon fell dead asleep. In the morning light, he discovered that the log was actually a dead Federal.

Sheridan praised Gregg's performance in protecting the wagon train's passage to safety on the James River. In 1866, when he prepared his official report of the Trevilian raid, Sheridan claimed, "This very creditable engagement saved the train, which should never have been left for the cavalry to escort." As the fighting raged, "General Gregg himself was as cool and as stern as a post," marveled an officer of the 1st Massachusetts.²⁷

Although his losses were much lighter than Gregg's, Hampton's force did not escape scot-free. Colonel Massie of the 12th Virginia Cavalry was badly wounded during the pursuit. Hampton reported that his division suffered six killed and fifty-nine wounded, but a review of newspaper reports of his casualties indicates that these figures are badly understated, and that his actual loss was close to two hundred.²⁸

Hampton had done a fine job managing the battle, and his men had fought fiercely. Butler's South Carolinians in particular had performed stellar service. Butler's keen eye for terrain and his foresight in ordering a reconnaissance of Gregg's line had enabled him to spot the fatal weakness in the Union position, and just as on the second day at Trevilian Station, the severe fire laid down by Butler's Enfields again persuaded some of the Federals that they faced a combined force of cavalry and infantry, not just dismounted horse soldiers.

The after action comments of the Union troopers make clear the desperate nature of the fighting. A member of the 10th New York Cavalry noted, "To the members of the Second Cavalry Division, the 24th of June, 1864, will always stand out in bold relief....It was the first and only time the colors of the Second Division were lowered." Another New Yorker called it "the most desperate fighting ever done by Gregg's gallant Second Division....We realized for the first time how it felt to get a good thrashing and then be chased for our lives." A member of the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry observed, "on the 24th of June the 2nd Cav Division met with a defeat such as it never did heretofore....It was the greatest fight I ever witnessed." "We did not need to be told that we were cleaned up in this fight," commented Matthew W. King, an eighteen-year-old Ohio trooper.²⁹

Early on the morning of Saturday, June 25, two weeks after the fighting began at Trevilian Station, Sheridan's train passed through Charles City Court House en route to Douthat's Landing on the James. Flatboats ferried the train across the James to safety, and as the wagons crossed the river a small contingent of the 6th Ohio Cavalry returned to the Samaria

Church battlefield with an ambulance, looking for wounded men. They retrieved a few severely injured Federals.

Once all the trains had safely crossed the river, the men of Sheridan's two weary, tattered divisions followed, prompting one Maine trooper to exclaim, "we were...again with the glorious old Army of the Potomac." An officer of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry summed up the feelings of the men quite well: "I don't think these great raids amount to much."³⁰ □

ERIC J. WITTENBERG is a cavalry historian who lives in Columbus, Ohio. His first book, *Gettysburg's Forgotten Cavalry Actions*, was named the winner of the 1998 Bachelder-Coddington Literary Award as that year's best new work interpreting the Battle of Gettysburg. This article is based on a chapter of his most recent book, *Glory Enough for All: Sheridan's Second Raid and the Battle of Trevilian Station, June 7-25, 1864*. He wishes to thank Lieutenant Colonel Jerry F. Myers (U.S. Army, Ret.) for his assistance with this article.

NOTES

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9. Diary of Nathan Webb, entry for June 25, 1864, Schoff Civil War Collection, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
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12. *Ibid.*, 391.
13. David M. Gregg to the Secretary of War, March 28, 1895 and Medal of Honor citation for Charles H. Smith Medal of Honor file, RG94, Entry 496, Box 1235, the National Archives, Washington, D. C.
14. Webb diary, entry for June 25, 1864; Hampton S. Thomas, *Some Personal Reminiscences of Service in the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac* (Philadelphia: 1889), p. 19.
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18. Henry Pyne, *Ride to War: The History of the First New Jersey Cavalry* (New Brunswick: 1961), p. 226.
19. James C. Mohr (ed.), *The Corman Diaries: A Northern Family in the Civil War* (Pittsburgh: 1982), p. 437-38.
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22. George Baylor, *Bull Run to Bull Run: Four Years in the Army of Northern Virginia, Containing a Detailed Account of the Career and Adventures of the Baylor Light Horse, Company B, Twelfth Virginia Cavalry, CSA* (Washington, D.C.: 1983), p. 225.
23. Gallagher, *A Diary*, 6.
24. *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 4, 1864.
25. Crowninshield, *A History of the First Regiment*, 226.
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27. O.R., Vol. 36, Part 1, p. 799; Crowninshield, *A History of the First Regiment*, 227.
28. O.R., Vol. 36, Part 1, p. 1097. Various newspaper reports provide much different, greater casualty figures. Wickham's brigade reported eight men killed and 53 wounded, for losses of 61. *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 1, 1864. Chambliss reported 10 men killed and 33 wounded, for losses of 43. *Richmond Sentinel*, September 6, 1864 and *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 1, 1864. Butler reported six men
- killed, 34 wounded, and two missing, for total losses of 42. *Charleston Daily Courier*, July 7, 1864. Gary reported five men killed, 20 men wounded, and 5 missing, for total losses of 30. *Richmond Daily Examiner*, July 30, 1864. No figures are available for Rosser's brigade. The total losses reported in the newspapers for five of Hampton's six brigades were 29 men killed, 128 wounded, and seven missing, for total casualties of 164, significantly more than what Hampton reported to Robert E. Lee. Of the Confederate loss on June 24, the *Richmond Examiner* states, "One hundred will cover our casualties." *Richmond Examiner*, June 27, 1864.
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30. Edward P. Tobie, *Personal Narratives of Events in the War of Rebellion*, No. 14 (Providence: 1882), p. 34; Crowninshield, *A History of the First Regiment*, 227.



COVER STORY

"Fire in the Valley" by John Paul Strain depicts John Singleton Mosby's attack on the federal supply train near Berryville, Virginia. As dawn broke on August 13, 1864, Mosby's men sent three rounds of artillery fire crashing into the federal encampment. The defenders fled in panic, leaving the wagons to be captured by Mosby's rangers.

For more information, visit John Paul Strain's website at www.johnpaulstrain.com, or call: 817-560-2143.

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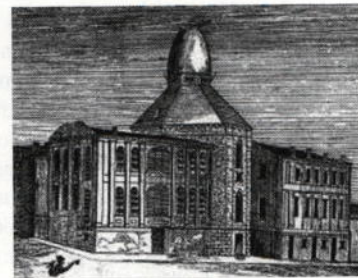


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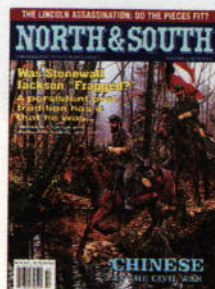
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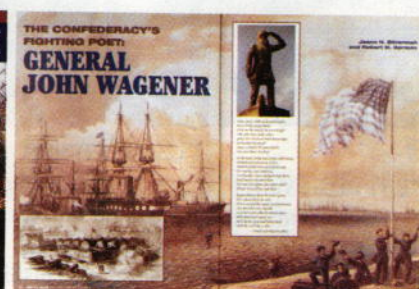
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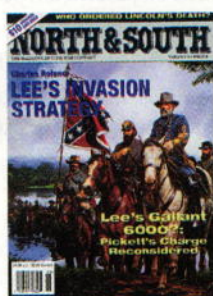
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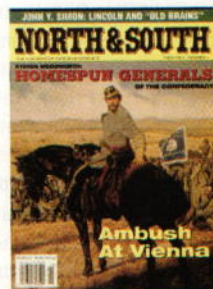
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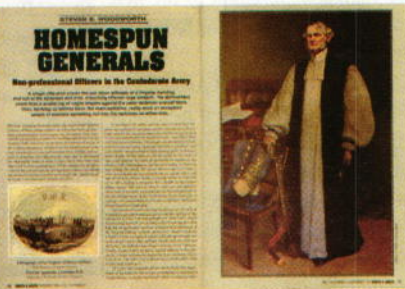
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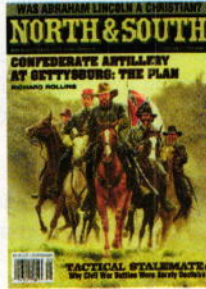
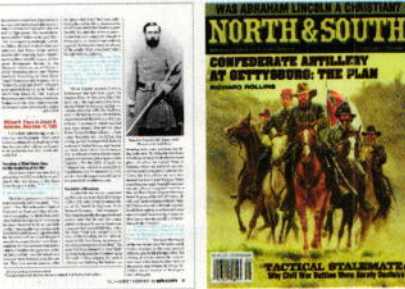
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APOSTLES OF SECESSION: What were the arguments of secession commissioners in the winter of 1860-1861? —Charles B. Dew

"THE HOTTEST PLACE I WAS EVER IN": The seven-hour Battle of Haw's Shop would show what Wade Hampton was made of. —Gordon C. Rhea

DESPAIR, HOPE, AND DELUSION: Even as their military effort collapsed, the morale of many Southerners continued to be high. —George C. Rable

TWO TALES OF TENNESSEE: Two actions, one from 1862 and one from 1863, dem-

onstrate the importance both of the commander on the spot and of the overall organization of cavalry to its success. —Laurence Schiller

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"IT HAUNTS ME NIGHT AND DAY": Fate brought Major General James G. Blunt's wagon train and William Quantrill's guerrillas together on the Kansas prairie on October 6, 1863, setting the scene for one of the war's bloodiest episodes. —Kip Lindberg and Matt Matthews

"A PERFECT PICTURE OF HELL": Captured *en masse* several times during the war, the men of the 12th Iowa were in a unique position to observe the deterioration of prison camp conditions. —Ted Genoways and Hugh H. Genoways

THE "BEST HATED MAN" IN THE ARMY: PART II: From the opening of the Cracker Line to service on the western frontier, General William Babcock Hazen was an outstanding, and outspoken soldier. —James R. Furqueron

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THE INFANTRYMAN IN COMBAT: What was it like to be an infantryman in the Civil War? —Reid Mitchell

BACKGROUND TO BLOODSHED: In many ways the lessons the U.S. Army learned in the Mexican-American War were highly misleading. —Perry Jamieson

THE CHANGING FACE OF BATTLE: Technological changes rendered frontal assaults more often than not suicidal, but some commanders were slow to learn. —Herman Hattaway

ARMS AND THE MAN: Exactly what were the changes that took place in infantry small arms, and what was their effect on the battlefield. —Louis A. Garavaglia and Charles G. Worman

FIELD FORTIFICATIONS: Did the extensive use of field fortifications truly usher in a "new species of warfare?" —David Lowe

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE EVOLUTION OF INFANTRY TACTICS: How did the evolution of Civil War infantry tactics relate to what had gone before and what came after? —Keith Poulter

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CONFEDERATE STRATEGY CONSIDERED: Was there a coherent Confederate strategy? Whose strategy was it? And what were its shortcomings? —David Eicher, Joe Harsh, Richard McMurry, Robert Tanner, Russell Weigley, and Steve Woodworth.

A HOT TIME IN ASHLAND: Three and a half weeks into the Overland Campaign, a Union cavalry brigade found itself surrounded and in acute danger of being destroyed. —Gordon C. Rhea

WHY DID ABRAHAM LINCOLN CHOOSE WAR?: Slavery had little to do with Lincoln's determination to crush the secessionist states. —Jeffrey R. Hummel

BATTLE FLAG: The Confederate battle flag in historical perspective. —John M. Coski

THE OTHER HIGH WATER MARK: Four hundred and fifty miles southwest of Gettysburg, a stone wall runs along a ridge line. Lacking monuments, unmarked, and hardly visited, it nevertheless marks the high tide of the Confederacy in the west. —Kenneth W. Noe

"A REGULAR SLAVE HUNT": Perhaps as many as several hundred free blacks and contrabands—men, women, and children—were seized by the Army of Northern Virginia during the Gettysburg Campaign, and taken into slavery. Was this the action of a few undisciplined units, or was it the settled policy of the army's high command? —Ted Alexander

VOLUME 5, #1

LEE'S LOST OPPORTUNITY: THE BATTLE OF GLENDALE: Robert E. Lee "had only that one day for a Cannae, and the army was not ready for it." —Stephen W. Sears

UNDERSTANDING LEE'S AUDACITY: Lee's audacity was rooted neither in biology nor in emotion, but in a cool analytical, professional expertise. —Richard Rollins

AFTER THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION: Abraham Lincoln's role in the ending of slavery. —William C. Harris

STONEWALL JACKSON AT FRONT ROYAL: Traditional accounts of the battle are sharply at variance with the historical facts. —Gary L. Ecelbarger

"POISONOUS TECHNIQUES AND DRESSING": A study of U.S. General Hospital #1 in Frederick, Maryland, through which more than 30,000 patients passed, sheds important light on the practice of medicine in the Civil War. —Terry Reimer

SULTANA: A CASE FOR SABOTAGE: New evidence suggests that foul play may have been the cause of the 1865 river disaster. —D.H. Rule



DEREK SMITH

REBEL RAID ON THE WATER WITCH



Against a lightning-raked sky, a force of weary and rain-soaked Confederate navy raiders quietly rowed toward a Union warship anchored for the night off the Georgia coast. The time was well after midnight on Friday, June 3, 1864, and the USS *Water Witch* was at rest near the mouth of Ossabaw Sound a few miles south of the seaport of Savannah. Pirate-style revenge was on the minds of many of the Southerners bent over their oars or quietly cocking their revolvers.

Despite the busiest shipbuilding efforts in the Confederacy, the Rebel navy squadron at Savannah had been corked up since late 1861, the Federal naval blockade all but strangling any attempts by the Southerners to get in or out of the city by sea. In mid-1863 the Confederates in Savannah had been mightily frustrated when the ironclad CSS *Atlanta*, considered by many to be the most formidable warship afloat, had met an ignominious end after several failed attempts to engage the enemy fleet. The Savannah-built *Atlanta* had finally made its maiden attack on June 17, but steaming toward two U.S. monitors stationed in Wassaw Sound she ran aground on a submerged sandbar. After a brief fight the Union vessels captured the stranded ironclad, along with her crew of about 160.

Stung by this defeat, Savannah's Rebel navy prepared a counter stroke: they would try to surprise, board, and shanghai one of the Union navy blockaders.

C.S. Lieutenant Thomas P. Pelot, a South Carolinian who was former executive officer of the ironclad CSS *Georgia*, concocted the plan in the spring of 1864. Captain William W. Hunter, commander of Savannah's naval forces afloat, the "Mosquito Squadron," agreed to the plan to "surprise and capture" an enemy ship. Soon, seven cotton barges, fifteen officers and 102 men from the various Confederate gunboats were detailed for the

raid. These sailors came from the C.S. vessels *Savannah*, *Georgia*, *Sampson*, *Resolute* and *Firefly*.¹

"This expedition must be a successful one," Hunter wrote in orders to Pelot. "To your firmness, judgment, and discretion I entrust this service." The Rebels' manpower and military resources were so limited at Savannah that Hunter felt the need to add this caution: "The officers, men, boats, and arms are not to be unreasonably hazarded in an effort to bring off the vessel."²

The expedition embarked from Fort Jackson on the Savannah River for the Isle of Hope on the afternoon of May 31, the steamer *Firefly* towing their boats through Augustine Creek. From Isle of Hope the party then rowed to Battery Beaulieu, a Rebel fort on the Vernon River several miles below Savannah, where the men camped overnight. At Beaulieu, they learned that an enemy ship had been seen headed south toward St. Catherine's Sound that afternoon.

"I regret to inform you that the bird has flown," a disappointed but undeterred Pelot wrote to Hunter that night. "I will send out scouts to the islands tomorrow, and I have every reason to suppose that I will find some game for tomorrow night, have provisions to last two or three days, and if you will have our whereabouts kept secret, I am pretty sure that we will have an opportunity in that time. The men are all cheerful and anxious for a brush, and it would be very discouraging to withdraw them until we are certain that the enemy intend keeping out of the way. Our organization is excellent, and I am confident of victory."³

Since Hunter had not imposed a deadline for the expedition, Pelot took this opportunity to ask for three days "to seek the opportunity so much desired." After sending this message to Hunter, Pelot apparently received word that an enemy ship was in the vicinity, and sent a further message: "I have reconnoitered the enemy. Am determined to board him to-night."

The Carolinian gathered his men about him for a final talk. Across the water, thunder rumbled in the distance. Pelot exhorted the sailors to do their duty

and exclaimed that the thunder was an indication that God was with them, the dark stormy night favoring their surprise attack. They set off from Beaulieu in two columns, eager to engage the Yankees.

But whether the Confederates had bad information or directions or the enemy shifted positions, Pelot's men could not find their target. They searched the coastline until almost dawn on Thursday, June 2, before wearily returning to their temporary camp.

"Have been out all night in search of the enemy, but as he changed his position after dark my efforts were fruitless," Pelot telegraphed Hunter that day. "Boats and men all safe....I will make a last effort to-night."⁴

Better hunting was to be had that night. After resting most of the day the raiders embarked about 9:00 p.m. and at Raccoon Key rendezvoused with scouts left there after the previous foray. These Rebs told of a Yank craft, stationed in Ossabaw Sound about three miles from them. Pelot had another chance.

"After waiting there until midnight we were ordered to get under way and pull cautiously," wrote Lieutenant Joseph Price, Pelot's second in command. The night was stormy and soon the men were drenched. Emerging in the distance was the dark silhouette of their quarry, illuminated by the lightning flashes. It was about 2:00 a.m. on Friday, June 3.

The vessel the Confederates were approaching was the U.S. gunboat *Water Witch*, a 378-ton, side-wheel steamer mounting four guns and with a crew of about 80. For almost a year she had been patrolling the sound, during which time it had been totally devoid of enemy activity. Nevertheless, her skipper, Lieutenant Commander Austin Pendergrast, had taken precautions against any surprises, keeping her steam up, cannon ready, and protective netting draped over her sides to deter boarders.

Pendergrast already had gained some notoriety in the war. He was a lieutenant aboard the USS *Congress* when the frigate was attacked by the famous ironclad CSS *Virginia* off Hampton Roads, Virginia, on March 8, 1862. When the *Congress*' captain was killed, Pendergrast assumed command. Severely damaged, the *Congress* was run aground and Pendergrast hoisted a white flag. While officers from both sides discussed the

Overleaf: No illustrations of the capture of the *Water Witch* exist, so far as we know. Pictured is a similar boarding action, the capture of the U.S. revenue cutter *Harriet Lane*.

Courtesy American Heritage Picture Collection

surrender and care of the ship's wounded, Union infantry and artillery ashore opened fire on the Southerners, inflicting casualties. The shelling forced the Confederates to back off, but the *Virginia* returned to bludgeon the *Congress* with her heavy guns, resulting in her explosion. Pendergrast apparently had nothing to do with what a C.S. officer described as the "unbridled treachery" of the *Congress'* bungled surrender, but some Rebels blamed him for this breach of war etiquette.

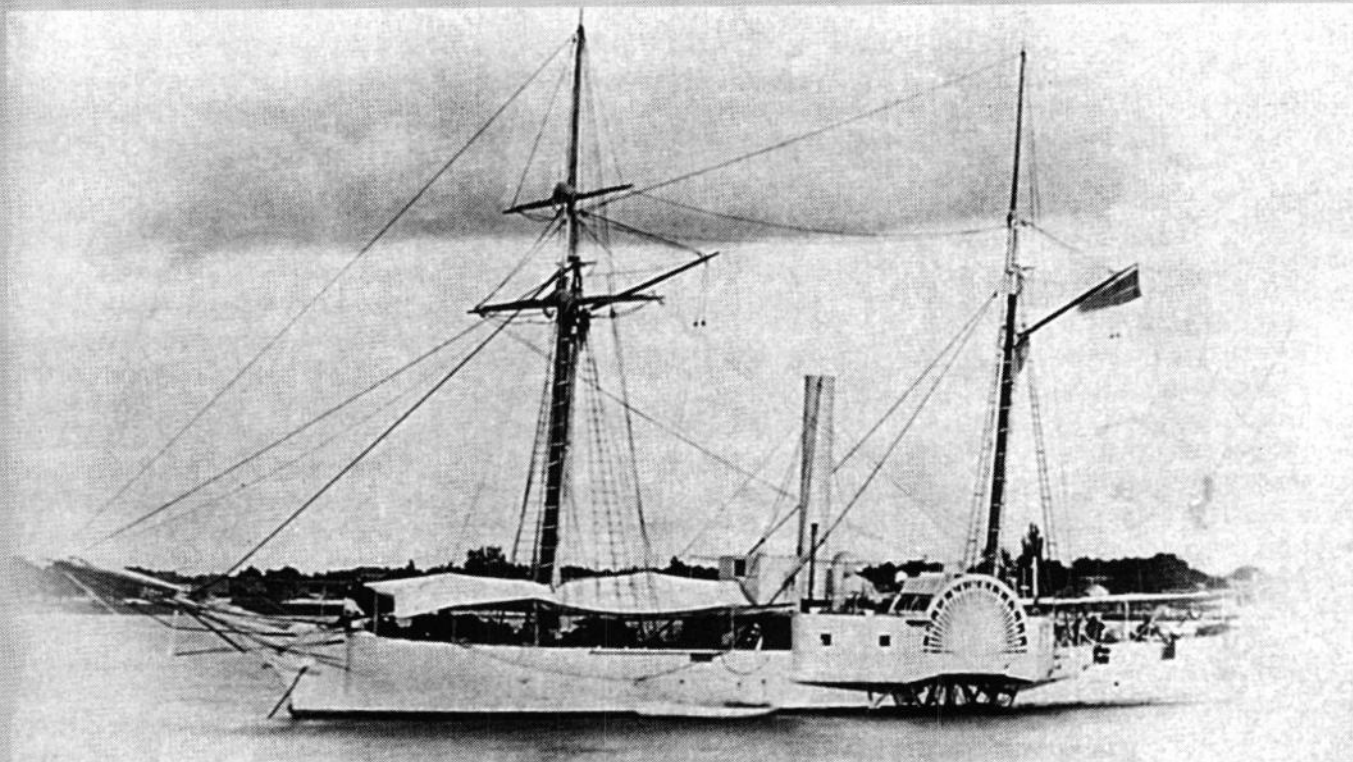
us from harm & to make us do our duty," recalled Midshipman Hubbard T. Minor, Jr., one of the raiders.

A Union lookout spotted one of Pelot's boats thirty yards from the ship, and called for the unknown intruders to identify themselves. Pelot's quick-thinking pilot, a black man named Moses Dallas, shouted back: "Runaway Negroes!"

The ruse bought valuable seconds for the Southerners, who closed in before Pelot yelled, "We are Rebels! Give way boys! Three cheers and board her!" As the

revealed by snaps of lightning as they struggled. The Rebels' gunpowder had been saturated by the rain, so that that they had to relay almost totally on their swords.

Pelot was the first raider to reach the deck and, according to some accounts, quickly found himself facing Pendergrast. Their blades clanged together before Pendergrast crumpled, knocked senseless with a head wound. Pendergrast survived but mentioned nothing of such a duel, reporting only that he was felled by a cut-



Peabody Museum of Salem

The side-wheel sloop *Water Witch*. The ship made national headlines in 1855 when she was fired on by the Paraguayan fort at Itapiru while conducting a scientific survey. One seaman was killed, and the U.S. sent an expedition to Paraguay "to demand satisfaction."

Writing at the time of the *Water Witch* episode, one of Pendergrast's fellow captains in the blockade squadron, Lieutenant C.C. Carpenter of the USS *Nantucket*, stated that Pendergrast, "nettled by the discomfiture of the *Congress*, had frequently declared he never would be taken."⁵

The Confederates approached the *Water Witch* in two lines, the portside column led by Pelot and the starboard barges headed by Price.

"When within three hundred yards all seemed to be asking god as I know I was to prosper our undertaking to shield

alarm spread through the ship and Union sailors tumbled out of their berths, the Confederates frantically slashed at the netting on both sides of the vessel in the face of gunfire from the deck above.

"In coming alongside, the enemy's fire was quite severe," recalled Price. Several of the raiders were hit and stumped back into their boats or into the water. Two of the Confederate craft were forced away from the ship and put out of action. But their comrades, brandishing pistols and swords, clambered up and over the gunwales to engage the Yankees.⁶

The confused hand-to-hand combat on the deck was surreal, the enemies

lass blow to the head. Moments later Pelot was shot through the heart and killed when he was illuminated by a flash of lightning long enough for a Federal officer to draw a bead on him. But the attackers did not falter.

The gunboat's acting master, Charles W. Buck, was one of the few Federals who emerged from below, to be engulfed in the fighting topside. "When I reached the deck it was so very dark with sharp lightning, as to render it almost impossible to distinguish one individual from another..." he later wrote. "I fired all six charges from my revolver at those on deck and attempting to board, and believe every shot took deadly effect."⁷ Buck

tried to train a howitzer on the raiders but fell wounded before he could prime it. Most of the bluejackets stayed below deck until the fight was over, some likely intimidated by a Rebel who snarled to them, "Stay down there or I'll cut your damned noses off."

One of the staunchest Union defenders was a black hand named Jeremiah Sills who emptied revolvers at the Confederates before he was shot. Among the raiders, Dallas also was down, hit in the first barrage of gunfire from the deck. Price, who had taken command of the boarders when Pelot fell, suffered a saber cut to the head.

But after no more than twenty minutes the Southerners had taken the *Water Witch*. Yankees and Rebels never agreed on whether the ship was formally surrendered, the former alleging the foe's superior numbers overpowered the crew.

Federal losses were two killed and seventy-seven crewmen captured, of whom twelve were wounded. One crewman escaped by jumping overboard. He was picked up by another U.S. ship after dawn and the alarm about the *Water Witch's* fate was spread through the fleet. Confederate casualties were seven dead and twelve wounded.

The Rebels at Battery Beaulieu learned of the attack shortly after daylight, when one of the two boats that had been driven off at the start of the attack returned. None of the Southerners knew the outcome of the assault.

With his pilot Dallas dead, a dazed Price needed help from his captives to guide his prize to safety. The *Water Witch's* pilot, Rufus Murphy, was wounded yet agreed to make the effort. But the gunboat ran aground en route to Beaulieu.

"A rebel officer afterwards told me that he had stood by Murphy with his pistol cocked, watching him, and would have shot him had he not been so badly wounded, suspecting him, as he did, of running the ship aground purposely," related W.H. Pierson, the *Water Witch's* acting assistant surgeon.⁸ The Rebels and their prisoners lightened her by tossing overboard barrels, chain, and coils of rigging, and soon she floated free.

Shortly after daybreak sentries at Battery Beaulieu spied an unidentified gunboat in Ossabaw Sound, anchoring

near the mouth of the Vernon River. Post commander Captain C.R. Hanleiter saw several boats and barges moving to and away from the vessel. He assumed these were enemy search parties looking for surviving members of Pelot's crew. In reality they were the victorious Confederates trying to free the *Water Witch*, which had run aground again. When three of the barges headed toward the battery, Hanleiter sent out a boat with a flag of truce. Shortly afterward all four vessels turned back for Beaulieu and the captain spied a Confederate standard displayed at half-mast on one of the barges. The revelation that the Southerners had been successful resulted in "inexpressible joy" among the post's soldiers.

**"In his death the
country has lost a brave
and gallant officer, and
society one of her
highest ornaments."**

By late morning the *Water Witch* had floated free and was anchored at Battery Beaulieu, the dead, wounded and prisoners taken ashore. The exhausted raiders celebrated their victory while mourning the losses of their comrades, particularly Pelot. Cheering civilians tossed them bouquets and seaman Minor was rewarded with a "little mule skin tobacco pouch" from one adoring belle.

Pelot's body was taken into Savannah where, honored as a hero, he was buried at Laurel Grove Cemetery. At his funeral service in Christ Church, his hat, uniform jacket, sword and one of the *Water Witch's* signal books adorned his casket. "In his death the country has lost a brave and gallant officer, and society one of her highest ornaments," Price reported.

The Union prisoners were escorted into Savannah by a detachment of C.S. marines on the night of June 4 while the wounded of both sides were taken to the city's Confederate Naval Hospital. Mirroring public jubilation over the victory, the *Savannah Republican* described the assault: "The night was very stormy, and the revolvers of our men had become so thoroughly saturated that they refused to fire, and consequently their sabres were almost the only weapons used."⁹

The newspaper also issued unlikely praise for Jeremiah Sills: "The bravest man...is said to have been a negro who had charge of the small arms and stood his ground, firing revolver after revolver until he finally fell under a concentrated fire, six or eight balls having penetrated his body."

The uninjured *Water Witch* crewmen were held overnight in Savannah and boarded a train the next day bound for Camp Sumter, the infamous prisoner of war compound at Andersonville, Georgia. The Confederates spent most of Sunday unloading stores and ammunition from their prize.

At the hospital Surgeon Pierson's request to be placed in charge of the *Water Witch's* wounded was granted by the Confederate medical staff. "This hospital was devoid of some of the luxuries which may be found in Northern hospitals, but was airy and comfortable, and the patients there received every care and comfort which the somewhat limited resources of the country well admitted," Pierson recalled.¹⁰

In Savannah Pendergrast received permission from Hunter on June 9 to write a brief report to U.S. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. "It affords me great satisfaction to state that the vessel was well defended, and we had only to succumb to superior numbers," Pendergrast wrote.

Yet the capture of the *Water Witch* was an embarrassment and blame spread like a wildfire among those who had lost her. Pendergrast, Buck and others contended that the ship's defense was waged by only a handful of officers and that the bulk of the crew did not come to their aid. "The men seemed paralyzed with fear, and remained under the hurricane deck without giving the officers the least support, though they were ordered out," Pendergrast wrote in an October 22 report to Welles.¹¹ Buck stated that the "ship was bravely and gallantly defended by the few who were engaged in the combat."¹²

"Of the crew, only a part engaged in the fight," reported surgeon Pierson. He added, "Some think that the engine room was given up without proper resistance on the part of the engineers." Pendergrast alleged the engineers acted in "the most cowardly manner."

Pendergrast especially faulted Acting Master's Mate E.D. Parsons, who had been the officer of the deck when the Confederates attacked. He accused Parsons of "carelessness" and of fleeing below as the raiders boarded. The Federals also reported that the terms of enlistment for most of the crewmen were expired at the time of the assault and that the sailors were disgruntled about having to remain on the ship. And Pierson added a compliment for Sills' courage to the shame of many others. Sills "is said to have fought most desperately, and this while men who despised him were cowering near with idle cutlasses in the racks joggling their elbows," the surgeon wrote.¹³

was put into service with the Rebels' naval force at Savannah. A few weeks after her seizure, a small party of Union raiders tried to burn her but was thwarted and captured.

Pierson worked with Confederate physicians in the hospital, caring for the wounded and ill of both sides, and was on good terms with the doctors in gray. "I know that while, at Savannah I tabled with the rebel surgeons in the hospital, and thus, during all my stay there, nearly six weeks, we had coffee never, only five or six times, butter about as often, and to the credit, of the surgeons, be it said, that while they denied themselves the luxury of tea at \$30 to \$40 per pound, they had it furnished to our wounded, and gener-

know it, he could assure me that the Savannah ladies were amusing themselves with my private correspondence, and that he had little doubt that my official books and papers, as well [as] some of my private books, had found their way to the office of his excellency Flag-Officer Hunter," the surgeon wrote.¹⁵

The capture of the *Water Witch* gave a fleeting boost to the morale of Confederate Savannah but did nothing to ease the grip of the Union blockade. The gunboat was moved up the Vernon River to White Bluff to avoid other expected attempts to recapture her. Among her gray seamen was John Thomas Scharf, a midshipman from Baltimore. At the time, Scharf was courting Anna Wyllly Habersham, the pretty fifteen-year-old daughter in a prominent Savannah family. Their attraction withered, however, and Anna spurned her young suitor while he was stationed on the *Water Witch*. Scharf would later write the renowned *History of the Confederate States Navy*.

The *Water Witch* never saw action in Confederate service. The Rebels themselves torched her when Major General William T. Sherman's Union army closed in on Savannah in December 1864.

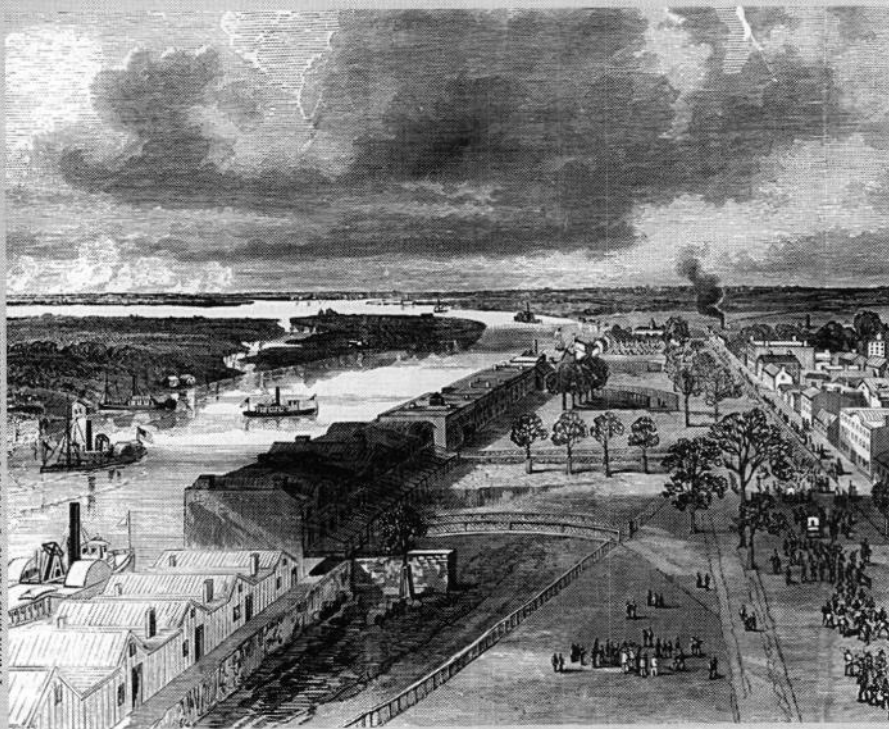
Thus the *Water Witch* sank into history, her adventure now long overshadowed by the more monumental, but no more desperate, episodes of the American Civil War.

DEREK SMITH is a freelance writer. His first novel, *The Sentinels*, about the CSS *Hunley*, has just been published by Frederic C. Beil, Inc., Savannah, Georgia.

NOTES

1. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 volumes (Washington, D.C.: 1863-1864), "South Atlantic Blockading Squadron," Series I, Volume 15, p. 491 (herein after ORN).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 492.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 477.
6. *Ibid.*, 501.
7. *Ibid.*, 479.
8. *Ibid.*, 482.
9. *Savannah Republican*, June 6, 1864.
10. ORN, Series I, Volume 15, p. 483.
11. *Ibid.*, 477-78.
12. *Ibid.*, 480.
13. *Ibid.*, 482.
14. *Ibid.*, 485.
15. *Ibid.*

Frank and Marie-T Wood Print Collections



Citizens of Savannah watch as U.S. troops occupy the city in December 1864. The port had been effectively blockaded for much of the war.

Pendergrast alone was ordered to stand trial at a general court-martial in December 1864 on the charge of "culpable inefficiency in the discharge of duty." The court found him guilty of not taking proper precautions to prevent such an attack and he was relieved of duty for two years.

The Confederate Congress issued an address of praise for the capture and the *Water Witch's* battle flag was presented to C.S. Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory as a battle prize. The *Water Witch*

ally fed them better than they fed themselves," he related.¹⁴ The *Water Witch* wounded were confined in Savannah for several weeks before being shipped to prisoner of war stockades in Macon and Charleston, South Carolina.

Before leaving Savannah, Pierson was able to retrieve only one of the two boxes of personal belongings he had been allowed to take from the *Water Witch*. "One of their [C.S.] officers, who was in a position to know, afterwards told me that if it was any consolation for me to



THE PREACHER'S TALE

The Civil War Journal of Rev. Francis Springer, Chaplain, U.S. Army of the Frontier

Edited by William Furry (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001. Pp. 182, \$34.95, ISBN 1-5572-8703-1).

Religion's role in the American Civil War has emerged as a central concern for scholars in recent years. Painsstaking work has been done to excavate the religious underpinnings of the southern pro-slavery argument, the significance of revivalism among Confederate soldiers and the effect of piety on the morale of both armies. Unfortunately, the role of religion in the ideology of the Republican Party, and in the North more generally, has been ignored. Indeed, religion as a force shaping Union sentiment has appeared largely as a footnote in standard political histories written by historians who often have great reservations about the significance of religious conviction for understanding the movements and organizations they catalog.

The journal of Francis Springer, chaplain of the 10th Illinois Cavalry, helps fill this gap in our understanding of the era. Editor William Furry has done an exquisite job of organizing the Lutheran minister's reflections by topic rather than chronology, making this work more accessible to the general reader of Civil War history than the book's title may imply. Furry's fine introduction gives us relevant biographical detail suggesting that Springer represented a cross-section of northern religious opinion, a large segment of the homefront that saw fidelity to the Union as fidelity to God.

Readers interested in understanding the complications of the war in the old southwest will benefit from the journal's descriptions of guerrilla fighting. Springer's memories of how the issues of the war intertwined with local blood feuds are chillingly vivid. An excellent selection of photographs gives us not only pictures of the Reverend Springer, but also of a hard-faced nineteen year old Confederate partisan named John Norwood on the very day of his execution by Federal authorities.

The editor has put together a fine set of appendixes to round out the volume, containing, most notably, a eulogy delivered by Springer for Abraham Lincoln to Union troops in Arkansas. Springer's eulogy of Lincoln expressed both the minister's hatred for the

BRIEFINGS Reviews

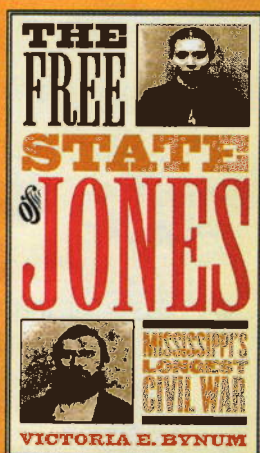
"scabbed leprous" Confederacy and his belief that a religious aura surrounded Lincoln and his sacrifice for the Union. "The blood of the ancient martyrs was the fertilizer of the church," proclaims Springer, "... likewise, the death of Lincoln imparts new vigor to the principles and policy of government which he so ably represented." Never has the animating principle of the devout North been more clearly stated.

—W. Scott Poole

University of South Carolina-Aiken

THE FREE STATE OF JONES Mississippi's Longest Civil War

By Victoria E. Bynum (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, c. 2001. Pp. xvi, 316. \$29.95, ISBN 0-8078-2636-7.)



During the Civil War, Jones County, Mississippi, was a hotbed of Unionist activity. Responding to the draft and the presence of Confederate forces in the county, a group of deserters and non-combatants organized the Knight Company and initiated a guerrilla campaign. According to Victoria E. Bynum, a professor of history at Southwest Texas State University, the roots of this conflict can be traced to the divergent interests of ancestors who chose opposing sides during the Revolutionary War, espoused contrary religious philosophies, were polarized over the institution of slavery, and were members of different social classes.

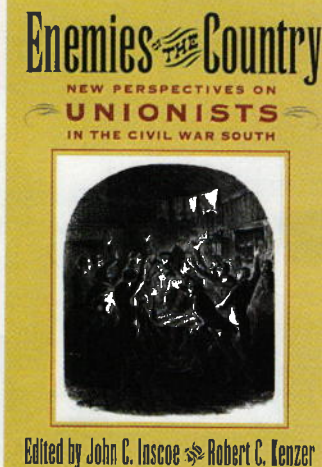
Bynum emphasizes the lives of both women and of slaves during the period, discussing the dynamic roles each was forced to play. While attempting to farm during the men's absences, and preparing supplies for loved ones in hiding, many spouses, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the renegade Knight Company faced alone the threat of Confederate violence and confiscation.

Bynum's work is well written and thoroughly researched. She uses available primary sources such as letters and newspapers, and creatively utilizes interviews with descendants of the participants, to retrace the events of the period. Numerous family trees in the appendixes supplement the text and provide a useful guide through the complex web of kin. The book is a welcome addition to the growing body of research being conducted on southern unionism, and is recommended for anyone interested in the complex dynamics of the Confederacy and the South.

—M. Shannon Mallard
Mississippi State University

ENEMIES OF THE COUNTRY New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South

John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer (eds.), (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001. Pp. 242, illustrations, notes, select bibliography, index. \$45.00, ISBN 0-8203-2288-1).



The chapters that form this book were originally presented as papers during a conference on "Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South," held at the University of Richmond in May 1998. A number of academic historians contributed to the conference and to this volume, including Jonathan M. Berkey, Scott Reynolds Nelson, John C. Inscoe, Gordon B. McKinney, Robert Tracy McKenzie, Keith S. Bohannon, Thomas G. Dyer, Carolyn J. Stefanco, William Warren Rogers, Jr., Kenneth C. Barnes, and Anne J. Bailey. A variety of topics, people, and localities within the South are cov-

ered in these vignettes, including the activities of individual Unionists and Loyalist communities in Atlanta, Montgomery, and Knoxville, and in Arkansas, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney note how some households were divided in sentiment, leading men and women to lie or hide their Unionist sentiments to preserve harmony in the family. Keith Bohannon relates the story of a Unionist couple in the mountains of Georgia whose vicious fights with their neighbors vividly demonstrate how dangerous it was to hold views counter to the Rebel majority. And Carolyn Stefanco discusses the poignant story of a Northern woman married to a Southern patriot who joined the army and left her alone in Savannah, wondering if her marriage had any future and mourning the loss of a brother killed while serving in the Union army. Chapters like these truly bring home the point of the conference that spawned this book, that families were deeply torn by the national crisis.

While all the chapters are well-done, the book naturally suffers from the limitations of a collection of short works written by a group of historians. This is not a monograph, it does not provide full coverage of the Southern Loyalists, and therefore might be less than satisfying to a reader who knows little about the topic. Each chapter tells a different story, but the common theme is quite clear. John Inscoe accurately notes this in his introduction. We cannot afford to label Southern Unionists with a single identification. They represented a wide variety of people, spoke with a multiplicity of voices, and had differing views on the nature of the Union and the war to preserve it. Their lives were filled with tension, conflict, and secrecy, within families as well as between neighbors.

No one can fault any of the authors or the editors for failing to correct the weaknesses inherent in publishing a collection of conference papers. Anyone interested in reading an introduction to the topic of Southern Unionism could turn to Richard N. Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Northeastern University Press, 1992), as a starting point. But if they would like to go beyond the introduction, they will find these essays interesting, thought-provoking, and even moving.

—Earl J. Hess
Lincoln Memorial University

FLORIDA IN THE CIVIL WAR

By Lewis N. Wynne and Robert A. Taylor
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2001.
Pp. 160, \$29.95, ISBN 0-7385-1368-7).

The authors provide a general overview of Florida during the Civil War and Reconstruction, liberally interspersed with over 200 illustrations, to give the reader a textural experience of the state's society during those trying periods. There are even two chapters devoted to Florida units serving with the Army of Northern Virginia and in the Western Theater. As a concession to the reader, footnotes were eliminated. The authors succeed in cramming into this small book of 160 pages an encyclopedic text.

From the earliest pages the authors note the sparse population of Florida. The demographics of the state showed that its people lived largely along the northern tier of the state from Pensacola to St. Augustine. Yet the plantations were centered about Tallahassee. Here 3.7 percent of the white population held 71 percent of the wealth. Urban Unionists and, as the war dragged on, the dissident war-weary small farmers of the eastern and western counties turned to the Union blockaders or the federal occupation army for succor.

The brief chapter concerning Florida as the Confederate storehouse flows swiftly from salt making, corn crops, citrus, and, toward the end, beef cattle. All these ingredients were vital for the Confederacy. Yet

her sister states never grasped the temptations of Florida's primitive logistics system and continued to demand more than the storehouse could supply.

As in every book there are a few errors and oversights. The illustration on page 28 is not of pre-war Apalachicola, but of wartime Mayport Mills at the mouth of the St. Johns River; although the United States 1st and 2nd Florida Cavalry are mentioned several times in the text, neither unit is listed in the index.

—George E. Buker
Jacksonville University

SHANKS

The Life and Wars of General Nathan G. Evans, C.S.A.

By Jason H. Silverman, Samuel N. Thomas, Jr., and Beverly D. Evans, IV (New York, New York: DeCapo Press, June 2002.
Pp. 203, \$26.00, ISBN 0-306811472).

Ask the nearest Civil War buff who Nathan G. Evans was and you probably won't learn too much. You possibly will be informed, and rightfully so, that Evans was a Confederate army officer. Likely, too, would you be told that he was known as "Shanks," a nickname he had earned as a young man at West Point due to his spindly legs. Maybe you would hear about his exemplary conduct at First Bull Run, where he helped slow the Union advance that eventually petered out on the slopes of Henry

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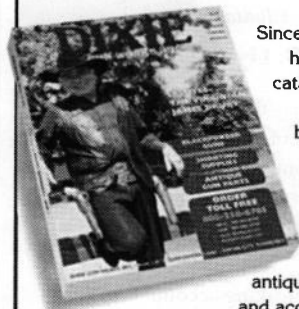
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House Hill. Or about how his rising star eventually fell amid accusations of misconduct and drunkenness.

These oft-repeated tidbits of Evans' life, however, offer little to those who want to gain a deeper understanding of the man. In *Shanks: The Life and Wars of General Nathan G. Evans*, C.S.A. Jason Silverman, Samuel Thomas and Beverly Evans have provided readers with the means to do so. Utilizing previously unpublished sources—namely Evans' extant personal papers, kept safe in the hands of his descendants these many years—the authors present Evans as a complex man whose Civil War experience was rich with success, failure, and personal conflict.

Shanks traces Evans' military career from his days at West Point (class of 1848), where he graduated thirty-sixth in a class of thirty-eight; his classmates included George McClellan, A.P. Hill, John Buford, Ambrose Burnside, and other future Civil War officers. Shortly after graduation, Evans, a second lieutenant in the First Dragoons, departed for the frontier. He returned to his home state of South Carolina in 1859 a decorated Indian fighter, married in 1860, and proceeded with his new wife to Texas, where he resumed his military duties.

Evans cast his lot with South Carolina after its secession from the Union in December 1860. He saw action at First Bull Run, after

which his reputation skyrocketed. A subsequent victory at Leesburg (Ball's Bluff) in October 1861 coincided with his promotion to the rank of brigadier general. Evans would see further action at Secessionville, South Carolina; Second Manassas; Antietam; Kinston, North Carolina; and Vicksburg.

But Evans was not able to maintain the level of popularity he attained in 1861. Twice during the war he was charged with misconduct: intoxication at Kinston, and, in 1863, disobedience of orders while stationed in Charleston. Though cleared of charges on both occasions, Evans' career never fully recovered; the war ended before he could find redemption upon the battlefield. After a failed attempt at the cotton business, Evans moved his family to Alabama, where he took a position as a school principal. He died in 1868, at the age of forty-four.

Though Evans comes across in *Shanks* as a likable figure, a capable fighter, a respected leader of men, and a devoted husband and father, Silverman, Thomas, and Evans do not shy away from revealing the general's faults as they see them. And, though not a psychobiography, the authors do let their subject speak for himself whenever possible, which allows readers to draw much of their own conclusions about the general's character—especially when Evans lobbies to defend his name and reputation. The result is an interesting insight into the life and mind of the man called Shanks.

—Terry Johnston
Elkton, Maryland

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CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTHWEST Recollections of the Sibley Brigade

Edited by Jerry Thompson (College Station:
Texas A&M University Press, 2001.
Pp. xxv, 195, \$24.95, ISBN1-58544-131-7).

In 1861 Texas Confederates came up with the idea of sending a military force to secure New Mexico and points west. Texans had long had designs on their western neighbors, and a previous expedition with similar purpose had come to grief during the days of the Republic of Texas. The Civil War operation proved equally ill-conceived. While other units from the Lone Star State were enrolling troops for service in the East, Texas also raised a brigade of cavalry and several batteries of artillery to serve under the command of former U.S. Army officer turned Rebel brigadier general Henry Hopkins Sibley. Sibley proved a poor leader, and the expedition, carried out during the winter and spring of 1862, a disaster.

Decades later, several members of the "Sibley Brigade" wrote their recollections of the campaign, and these were published in a small-town Texas newspaper, the *Overton Sharp-Shooter*. Rediscovered by historian Don Frazier, these reminiscences are here published under the editorship of Jerry Thomp-

son. As Thompson points out in his excellent introduction to the volume, the writers' perspective was emphatically, and not surprisingly, that of Confederate Texans. The old soldiers sang the praises of their unit, if not its commander, and greatly overestimated both its accomplishments and the size of the enemy forces it faced. They had high praise for the opposing general, Edward Canby. The failure of the expedition was not, they felt sure, the fault of themselves or their comrades in gray.

The book is organized into eighteen chapters written by seven different members of the brigade. The chapters are arranged chronologically, but they often overlap or re-tell the stories of the same events from different perspectives, giving the book a fascinating sort of historical stereo effect. For example, the reader encounters in quick succession five different accounts of the Battle of Valverde.

In conclusion, this volume is a priceless resource for anyone interested in the New Mexico campaign, the role of Texans in the Civil War, or first-hand narratives by Civil War soldiers.

—Steven E. Woodworth
Texas Christian University

GLORY ENOUGH FOR ALL Sheridan's Second Raid and the Battle of Trevilian Station

By Eric J. Wittenberg (Washington, D.C.: Brassy's, 2001, notes, bibliography, index, 51 illustrations. Pp. 391, \$27.50, ISBN 1-57488-353-4).

In this well-written book, Eric Wittenberg persuasively argues that the Battle of Trevilian Station, fought in Virginia during the summer of 1864, has been unappreciated for its size and consequences. Wittenberg also argues several subthemes. One concerns the stature of Union general Philip Sheridan, who fought the campaign less effectively than he claimed during and after the war. His counterpart, Confederate general Wade Hampton, led his horsemen aggressively and, according to Wittenberg, should be considered the winner of the campaign. Furthermore, his victory aided Robert E. Lee's strategic plans in Virginia and prolonged the Civil War.

Wittenberg makes his case regarding Sheridan and Hampton, but is less convincing about Trevilian's strategic outcome. Sheridan did not achieve his tactical goals, such as destroying a significant stretch of the Virginia Central Railroad in the vicinity of Charlottesville or linking up with General David Hunter's forces. But he also had strategic objectives. Wittenberg overstates by concluding that "nothing about the Battle of Trevilian Station can be considered a Union victory." (p. 305) As the author acknowledges, "Sheridan's raid had successfully drawn off Hampton's and Fitz Lee's cavalry from his [U.S. Grant's] front," and that "although

Sheridan had lost the Battle of Trevilian Station, the long and brutal raid drew off the two best divisions of [R.E.] Lee's cavalry: while the Army of the Potomac crossed the James River in mid-June." (p. 223) The cavalry campaign was a tactical defeat for Sheridan but he contributed to the success of a major Federal turning movement. That in no way detracts from Wittenberg's other conclusion that "Hampton's victory at Trevilian Station had saved the Virginia Central from demolition and left it available for use by Lee's army." (p. 224)

Wittenberg tabulates the high casualties for each side in the campaign; the Federals perhaps sustained fourteen percent losses and the Confederates around twelve percent. Hundreds of horses in both armies also were killed or debilitated. Although the campaign significantly reduced the effectiveness of the Union's cavalry corps, it was difficult for the Confederates to recoup their losses in either men or animals; attrition continued to wear them down.

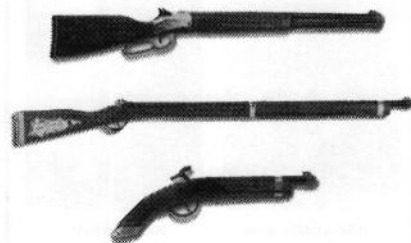
In this detailed tactical study, Wittenberg makes excellent use of wartime reports and postwar recollections, and renders complex maneuvers understandable. He effectively interweaves well-chosen quotes from soldiers and officers. The author's evocative descriptions and clear maps will give readers a good understanding of terrain. A detailed index and a generous number of photographs round out the book.

—Joseph G. Dawson III
Texas A&M University

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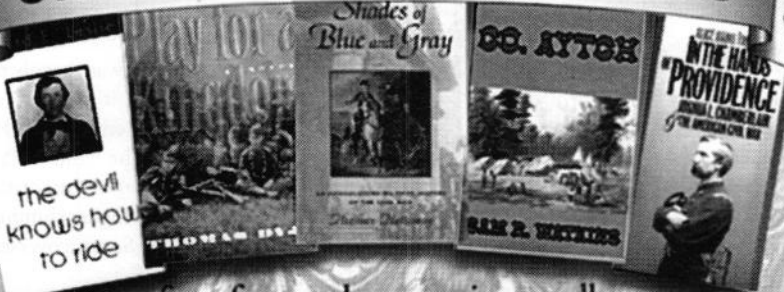
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NORTHERN NAVAL SUPERIORITY AND THE ECONOMICS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

By David G. Surdam (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. 288, \$34.95, ISBN 1-5700-3407-9).

Economist David Surdam has written a most important book. In it he examines the role of the Union blockade in defeating the Confederacy. He notes that the South had important economic assets at the start of the war: raw cotton, cattle, and corn. All proved disappointing. "Cotton diplomacy" did not secure European intervention, and revenues from cotton exports failed to sustain the Southern economy. Food supplies also did not reach troops in the field. To what extent was the blockade responsible?

The blockade has long been a subject of historiographical debate. Its detractors include historians Richard Beringer, Frank Owsley, Raimondo Luraghi, and Stephen Wise; its defenders are Edwin Coddington, Bern Anderson, and Stanley Lebergott. The detractors point out that the vast majority of blockade runners got through, even as late as 1865, and that the Confederacy never lost a battle for want of arms or ammunition. The defenders stress that the blockade disrupted traditional trading patterns and cost the South heavily in financial terms.

Count Surdam among the blockade's defenders. Much of his study centers on the role of cotton, by far the most important pre-war Southern export, in the blockade equation. He notes that the effectiveness of the blockade should not be measured in goods smuggled through it, nor the success rate of the blockade runners. The points to remember are that the total volume of trade was sharply reduced and the cost of shipment dramatically increased. With only one-tenth of the 1860 industrial production of the United States, the Confederacy had to import manufactured goods to win the war, yet higher shipping costs consumed much of the South's overseas purchasing power.

The increased cost in transporting cotton to Europe accounted for almost all the increase in its price in Europe and the North. High shipping costs also meant that bulky items, such as railroad iron and machinery, could not be brought in by blockade runners. Furthermore, the blockade forced the Confederacy to import goods through less-convenient ports, and it reduced the flow of consumer goods into the South, thus affecting civilian morale.

Surdam believes that the focus on goods smuggled has prevented examination of the important effects of the blockade. The blockade disrupted patterns of intraregional trade and denied the Confederacy revenue. The reduction in intraregional trade by water in-

creased the burden on an already inadequate Southern railroad net, which progressively deteriorated during the war. In early 1865, millions of rations were at Augusta and Columbus, Georgia, awaiting shipment. The bottleneck resulted from the inability of the Southern railroads to haul them.

Surdam concludes: "The Northern naval efforts appear to have been judicious. . . . For the resources expended, the blockade appears to have been a worthwhile instrument."

—Spencer C. Tucker

Virginia Military Institute, Lexington

A SCYTHE OF FIRE

By Warren Wilkinson and Steven E. Woodworth (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishing, 2002. Pp.328, \$27.95, ISBN 0-380-97752-4)

The 8th Georgia Infantry Regiment left a courageous and imperishable record in the war. Beginning with the peacetime social clubs and semi-military organizations that emerged in anticipation of the war, to Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the authors give flesh to this famed regiment.

Wilkinson, who began the work before his death in 1995, and Woodworth utilize diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, service records and other primary sources to provide insight into the fears, challenges and motivation of the 8th Georgia in various theaters of the war. Employing a narrative, nearly biographical style of prose, the authors do not overburden the reader with muster rolls or detailed casualty records; rather, personal accounts are woven into a seamless story. There is, however, a helpful appendix containing chronological service information, so that those less familiar with the regiment can cross-reference people (officers) and events.

As with narratives, *A Scythe of Fire* contains an historical plot line, complete with a climax. The authors build upon the regiment's development from various ill-equipped companies, to climax at the Second Battle of Manassas. The anticlimactic, but perhaps most riveting, account revolves around the Gettysburg Campaign, the aftermath of which "broke the heart of old regiment and left it a shadow, almost a ghost...it did not die but continued to fade away under constant abrasions..." (p. 261)

If there is a criticism, albeit minor, this reviewer would have enjoyed additional appendix material, such as the full text of Pastor John Jones' farewell sermon to the Light Guards and Miller Rifles. The theological motivation of the southern troops seems to be an underestimated focal point.

This is an engagingly written summary of the 8th Georgia Infantry Regiment. The style and research will suit both the general and specialist reader.

—John M. Kenney

Detroit Country Day School

MONITORS

The Men, Machines and Mystique

By Jerry Harlowe (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 2001. Pp. 111, \$17.95, ISBN 1-5774-7056-7).

Jerry Harlowe aptly describes his book as an introductory "series of vignettes" of Civil War monitors. It might stretch the point to describe, as he does, the powerful World War II Iowa-class battleships as their direct descendants, and the British might justifiably dispute the author's claim that "the Union Navy of 1865 was a force unequalled and unmatched by any navy in the world." Certainly the author is correct in pointing out that its period of glory would be brief. In the 1870s the United States slipped into a period of naval inferiority—its navy became smaller than that of Chile!

Harlowe begins with brief descriptions and illustrations of the various monitor classes, both blue water and riverine. He then discusses construction of the first *Monitor*, and provides brief biographies of key commanders and details of some of the more famous incidents involving the monitors during the war, such as the siege of Charleston and the loss of the *Tecumseh* in the Battle of Mobile Bay. The next section is a "Photo Gallery" of the ships and the men who manned them. The final section covers efforts to preserve the monitors and their memory, including discussion of the cyclorama commemorating the battle between the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* (Virginia). This is a useful short book, especially for its illustrations, many of which cannot be found elsewhere.

—Spencer C. Tucker
Virginia Military Institute, Lexington

LEE & HIS ARMY IN CONFEDERATE HISTORY

By Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. xviii, 295, notes, index. \$34.95, ISBN: 0-8078-2631-6).

When it comes to writing articles, there is no more prolific author than Gary W. Gallagher. Now he has put together a collection of his essays, with Robert E. Lee as the focus.

Most of the essays in this book have been published elsewhere, either in the campaign series he edits or in periodicals. Gallagher, however, has taken the trouble to slightly revise the previously published essays. This has allowed him to deal with scholarship, both good and bad, that has appeared since the articles were first published.

In addition, Gallagher includes two new essays. The first questions the image of Lee as a military anachronism confronting warfare's growing modernity. Gallagher suggests that in many ways, especially when it came to the

mobilization of resources, human or otherwise, Lee was very much the modern soldier. Also challenged in this essay is the image of Lee as a commander whose strategic myopia led him to ignore both the dangers and opportunities confronting the Confederacy west of the Blue Ridge.

The other new essay examines the roles of Lee, Jubal Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman in shaping the public view of the conflict in the post-war period. Gallagher suggests that one of the first people to propagate the idea that the Army of Northern Virginia was simply overwhelmed by superior numbers was Robert E. Lee himself. This was quickly picked up by the most prolific of Confederate generals, Jubal Early. Combined with several other threads of thought and the work of other former Confederate generals, he helped create the myth of the "Lost Cause," almost a religion, whose two saints were Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Much of this was retained in a more moderate form in the works of one of the most influential historians of the Civil War, Douglas Southall Freeman. With Freeman's elegant and prolific pen, the picture of Lee and Jackson as secular southern saints was set for decades to come. The one thing missing from this essay is the reverse side of the coin, namely the demonization of Lee's second-in-command, James Longstreet. Although that has been well covered by other scholars, Gallagher

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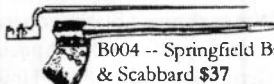
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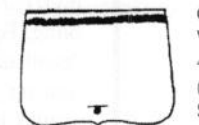
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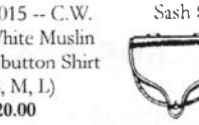
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should have said a few words here. In fact, Longstreet's name does not even appear in the essay, a major omission.

All of these essays are quintessential Gallagher. They are marked by crisp prose, impeccable research and perceptive analysis. For anyone who is unfamiliar with the campaign series that Gallagher edits, this book is a must.

—R.L. DiNardo

USMC Command and Staff College
Quantico, Virginia

HEADQUARTERS IN THE BRUSH Blazer's Independent Union Scouts

By Darl L. Stephenson (Athens: Ohio
University Press, 2001. Maps, notes,
bibliography, index. Pp. xxiii, 266. \$29.95,
ISBN 0-8214-1381-3).

In *Headquarters in the Brush*, Darl L. Stephenson provides an interesting glimpse into the operations of Captain Richard Blazer's Independent Union Scouts. Often overshadowed by Mosby's Rangers, who defeated Blazer's command at Kabletown, Virginia, in November 1864, the story of these Union scouts has never received thorough treatment. Stephenson attempts to rescue them from being remembered as merely "one more Union unit outwitted by the cunning men of Mosby's command." (xvii) In setting the record straight, the author argues that, despite the Kabletown disaster, Blazer's men had already proven their worth as a counter-guerrilla force.

Especially valuable is Stephenson's discussion of Colonel Carr B. White's creation of the unit in 1863, and its development into a cohesive force well suited for the shadowy war in the Shenandoah. The author also goes beyond the Civil War to connect Blazer's operations with George Crook's use of Apache scouts against Geronimo in the 1880s. However, readers may find some arguments troubling. For example, Stephenson blames the "egotistical intrigues" of Phil Sheridan for obscuring the truth about Blazer's success. He argues that after the unit's destruction at Kabletown, Sheridan never refilled its ranks and instead turned to his own personal corps of scouts under Major Henry Young. In effect, Sheridan turned his back on Blazer's Scouts in favor of a more successful unit—and one that he created—in order to reap more glory. However, after Kabletown, Sheridan had good reason to let the command wither, since Blazer and many of his veterans were in Richmond prisons. More importantly, by November the Union victory at Cedar Creek had nullified any significant Confederate threat in the Shenandoah. Thus Sheridan's decision to disregard Blazer's defeated command was possibly due more to the fact that it was no longer needed rather than to Little Phil's alleged machinations.

Though the author's reach exceeds his grasp with regard to Sheridan's intrigues, he

has successfully illuminated both the exploits of Blazer's scouts and the murky world of guerrilla warfare in the Shenandoah Valley. Civil War enthusiasts will find the book both enjoyable and enlightening. —William B. Feis
Buena Vista University

Crossfire (continued from page 7)

* * * *

Mr. Hummel is an exceptional historian on the Civil War. I refer to his book often. But he and I have disagreed on slavery as the cause of secession. In his article, he takes an usually strong view, suggesting that the case is closed on slavery as the absolute, unquestionable cause of secession: "That the proposition no longer admits of any historical doubt."

That is a strange comment, as there are innumerable historians who not only doubt that proposition, they don't buy it at all. Yet one has to admit, Hummel's case for slavery is easy to support, since the Southern politicians proclaimed from the housetops, so to speak, that they seceded over slavery. Shouldn't that end the matter?

It would on its face, but it makes no sense to secede over a matter the South had already won. With the Supreme Court in their back pocket with the Dred Scott decision, which ripped the guts out of the Republican party's platform of no slavery in the territories. Then, Lincoln was willing to give slavery more protection than it had ever before enjoyed, like a vigorous enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, which the abolitionists hated above all else. And in his inaugural address he made it clear he had no right or inclination to interfere with slavery. He then gave his support to a new constitutional amendment protecting slavery, ironically number 13, which could never be revoked. This amendment was a coup de grace to the abolitionist. It meant that no matter how many non-slave states joined the Union, they could never gang up on the South over slavery. What more could the slave states have asked for? As Charles Dickens observed, the South seceded "in spite of slavery, not because of it."

Astute Northern publications saw through the slavery facade as the cause of secession. *The North American Review*, a Boston publication, was unquestionably the most respected journal in America throughout the 19th century. Every writer of note sought to have articles published in that journal. In the October 1862 edition, the editors wrote: "Slavery is not the cause of the rebellion. Slavery is the pretext on which the leaders of the rebellion rely."

Even more to the point is an editorial in the *Boston Transcript*, March 18, 1861, on the eve of the war pointing to slavery as the mask that covered the South's real motives:

Alleged grievances in regard to slavery were originally the cause for the sepa-

ration of the cotton states, but the mask has been thrown off and it is apparent that the people of the principal seceding states are now for commercial independence. They *dream* that the centres of traffic can be changed from Northern to Southern ports.

In Britain, many observers saw through the slavery facade. Most notably, Charles Dickens. He was seriously involved in world events and in his weekly, *All the Year Round*. In December 1861 he published two articles: the first on what the rebellion was not about, and in the following week, what it was about. After devastating the slave argument as a cause of secession in his first article, he left his readers with this enticement for the next issue:

If it be not slavery, wherein lies the partition of the interests that has led at last to actual separation of the Southern from the Northern States?

For Dickens there were long standing historical differences centered on fiscal, economic, and trade factors that were behind the slavery facade, the real nuts and bolts of the conflict. The "rich man's war" as it was called by the troops. In the next article by Dickens, he explained these factors, ending with this comment:

So the case stands, and under all the passions of the parties and cries of battle lie the two chief moving causes of the struggle. Union means so many millions a year lost to the South, secession means the loss of the same millions to the North. The love of money is the root of this as of many many many other evils.

Finally, focusing on Hummel's "Why did Lincoln Choose War?" I submit Lincoln answered that with the last recorded words on his lips prior to the war, as a naval force was being assembled to reinforce Fort Sumter. His words were not lofty sentiments on preserving the Union, or emancipating the slaves. Said Lincoln: "And open up Charleston to the world with its 10% tariff, what then will become of my revenue?"

—Charles Adams
author of *WHEN IN THE
COURSE OF HUMAN EVENTS*

ED.: This is not my area of expertise, so I asked James McPherson to respond to this letter.

Historians are indebted to Charles Adams for showing us how an imaginative and creative use of evidence can change orthodox interpretations. Most of us have been stuck in the tiresome old rut of citing explicit statements by Southern politicians, editors, and secession conventions as evidence of their reasons for seceding. As Mr. Adams notes, they "proclaimed from the housetops" that their fears for the future survival of slavery under a Republican administration motivated their decision to leave the Union. How naive of us

to take them at their word! And how brilliant of Mr. Adams to uncover statements by the *North American Review*, the *Boston Transcript*, and Charles Dickens which unquestionably prove otherwise. These sources, especially Dickens, are far better evidence for the real motives of secession than such uninformed people as Jefferson Davis, Alexander H. Stephens, the editors of the *Charleston Mercury*, *Richmond Enquirer*, *North Carolina Crescent*, and a host of other Southern newspapers, or those secession commissioners that Charles Dew analyzed—all of whom proclaimed from the housetops that red herring of slavery. I hope that those innumerable historians cited by Mr. Adams, who have previously remained invisible, will come into the open and join the search for additional evidence for the causes of secession whose reliability will be equal to that of Charles Dickens.

I must chide Mr. Adams, however, for his lack of originality in the Abraham Lincoln quotation he fabricated. Others have more cleverly manufactured quotations of Lincoln statements that Lincoln never made. It is true that Lincoln (and two-fifths of the congressional Republicans) supported a proposed Thirteenth Amendment in 1861 to guarantee slavery in the states. But they did so because they believed it did not go beyond what the Constitution already guaranteed, and because many of them were confident that the Amendment would never be ratified by the required three-fourths of the states. Almost all Republicans, headed by Lincoln, opposed and defeated the far more comprehensive Crittenden Compromise that would have permitted slavery in present and future territories south of 36° 30', protected slavery in the District of Columbia, forbade interference with the interstate slave trade, and strengthened the Fugitive Slave Law.

Before those innumerable historians come out of the closet, they might ponder two statements that Lincoln actually *did* make. In a letter to Alexander Stephens on December 22, 1860, Lincoln tried to reassure him on the issue of slavery in the states where it existed. "I suppose, however, this does not meet the case. You think slavery is *right* and ought to be extended; while we think it is *wrong* and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub." More than four years later, in his second inaugural address, Lincoln declared that slavery was a "powerful interest" in the antebellum South. "All know that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war." —James McPherson, Princeton University

ERRATA

I just discovered an embarrassing error on page 42 of my article "Why Did Lincoln Choose War?" from your September 2001 issue. Norway peacefully seceded not from Den-

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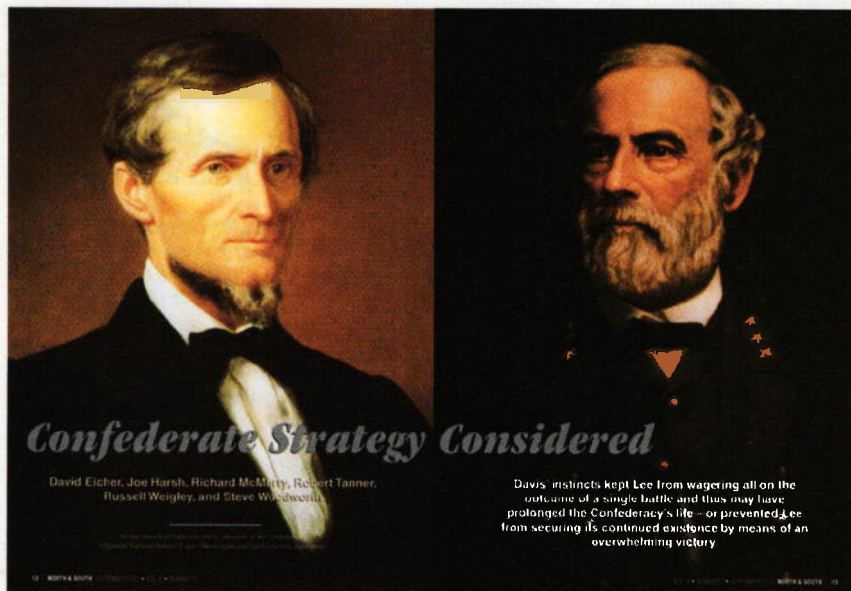
mark in 1905 but rather from Sweden. My apologies to you and your readers.

—Jeffrey Rogers Hummel

*Departments of Economics and History
Golden Gate University*

CONFEDERATE STRATEGY

I'd like to compliment *North & South* for publishing an excellent discussion of Confederate strategy, and its influence on the outcome of the war, in its September 2001 issue [vol. 4, #7]. The major strategic options were ably summarized by very qualified scholars.



However, it should be pointed out that such discussion, intellectually interesting as it was, minimized the essential fact that the South lost because of lack of men, not because of any strategic choices it made.

Generally, the best proof of any assertion is not the theoretical arguments made for (or against) it, but rather how the assertion has fared in real life. For example, I've been asked whether it is possible for a major league pitcher to strike out all 27 batters in a game. Rather than constructing theoretical arguments on whether it can be done, I answer by pointing out that, in all the tens of thousands of baseball games played in the last century, no pitcher has ever come close to 27 strikeouts. What better way to prove something *can't* be done than by pointing out that nobody's ever done it?

Applying this logic to the Civil War means comparing the North and South to similar nations engaged in war. The fact is, in every major 19th century conflict between European/Caucasian nations (as the United States, basically, was) the side with the larger population and/or the largest army (usually, but not always, the same side) won. No side, outnumbered as the South was (estimates range from 2-1 to 4-1), ever won.

These 19th century wars would include the Napoleonic Wars; the Crimean War; the Dano-Prussian Wars of 1848 and 1864; the Russo-Swedish War of 1808; Sweden's 1813-

14 war with Denmark; the Austro-Piedmont War of 1848; the Franco-Austrian War of 1859; the Dutch-Belgian War of 1830-31; the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71; the Seven Weeks War (1866); the Serbo-Bulgar War (1885); and the Spanish-American War (1898). They would also include civil wars and wars of secession such as the two Polish revolutions; the Swiss War of the Sonderbund (1847); the two Carlist Wars in Spain; the Hungarian Revolution of 1848; the Miguelite Wars in Portugal; the Schleswig-Holstein War

(1848-51); the Italian Revolution of 1860-61; and the Paris Commune (1871).*

Obviously, in these wars, the smaller/losing side adopted a variety of strategies. None won the war. Nor did superior leadership ever overcome superior numbers. In several of these wars, notably the Napoleonic Wars and the Hungarian Revolution, the losing side's generals were better than the winner's. For example, Napoleon was so superior to his opponents that, by 1813, the opponents adopted a strategy of retreating whenever he appeared. The simple fact is that numbers prevailed. Better strategy and leadership delayed the defeat, but never prevented the defeat. Numbers were the *one* common factor the winning sides shared.

The pre-Civil War U.S. military experience was similar. In the Revolutionary War, the colonies, outnumbered over 2-1 by Britain, got pushed around until France and Spain entered the war and reversed the odds. In the War of 1812, the U.S. did quite well (despite incompetent generals) until, in 1814, Britain was able to send reinforcements to Canada. Though by 1814 the U.S. had much better generals (Andrew Jackson, Jacob Brown, Winfield Scott) than before, the numbers forced the U.S. on the defensive. In the Mexican War the U.S. bested smaller Mexico.

The Confederacy's performance in the Civil War far outshone that of France in the

Franco-Prussian War, fought only five years later. Compared to the Confederacy, France entered the war with every advantage. The population odds were almost equal (forty-five million Germans to thirty-seven million French); France had a superior navy that maintained control of the seas; France had a preexisting government and army; France had a large industrial base and the ability to import all the supplies it wanted; and there was no latent "Germanism" in France comparable to Southern unionism. Yet France sued for peace within a year, whereas the South held out for four years. To me that is pretty good evidence that the South must have made better strategic choices than France or the other outnumbered 19th century nations who lost wars (usually in much less than four years).

Napoleon once cynically observed that "God is on the side of the big battalions." Discussions of strategy, although interesting in themselves, should not lose sight of this truism.

—Bruce Allardice
Des Plaines, Illinois

*Considerations of space preclude a detailed analysis of these wars and the numbers involved. I'd be happy to furnish these details to interested parties upon request.

ED.: A couple of quibbles. If pointing out that nobody's ever done something is a good way of proving it cannot be done, one could have "proved" at various times that running a four-minute mile, flying a heavier-than-air machine, or journeying to the moon were all impossible. In fact, according to that logic it is impossible ever to do anything new!

And surely the varied fortunes of, say, France and the Confederacy could have resulted from causes other than strategic choices they made. Disparate size, for instance.

DO NOT BLAME FLAGS OR SYMBOLS

At first I thought that *North & South* was tilting to the North but after reading the letter in June [volume 4, #5] about a so called "Southern" bias I guess you must still be in the middle.

I wish to take up the argument about what to call the period from 1861-1865. I keep on hearing arguments, especially by James McPherson, about the "Civil" War. Let us look at the international understanding of the term "civil war."

Mr. McPherson, you keep on calling it a "civil war" but what is understood internationally is: "a civil war is a war inside a country in which two or more parties try to take over the central government, oust or exterminate the other party(s) and rule supreme afterwards." Especially taking over the capital and government buildings and embassies is central to this definition.

Now, Mr. McPherson, where is your party trying to take over the government, occupy your Washington D.C. capital or ousting your government (let exterminate pass for the

time)? They just wanted to be left alone, had their capital in place, and even asked you people not to disturb them.

What did your people do then? Invade a country, waging war to another nation in place and you call that a civil war? It is aggression! Oppression, just like Indonesia did in East Timor. Is their breaking away a civil war? The Vietnamese war you did not call a civil war, right again: the north was trying to subdue the south, aggression! When Belgium broke away from the Netherlands in 1830 (because of northern(!) arrogance—both were speaking the same language and shared a long history) was that called a civil war? No sir, it was rightly called secession, just in cases like Czechoslovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, East Timor and many to come: Aceh in Indonesia, possibly RMS, Kashmir and an independent Sikh state in India; Bangla Desh from Pakistan. An endless list. Does Mr. McPherson call those civil wars too?

I think people like McPherson should really think of a better term denoting conflicts like 1861-1865, when they really were wars for independence, wars against aggression, wars for freedom.

Most countries in this world are born out of secession, the USA is a good example and who would deny the right of people to secede—if they wish to do so? Are you the moral judge, the supreme high court?

How about West Virginia seceding from Virginia and getting away with it? Is not that strange? Why Reconstruction if the war was about keeping the Union? For the northern view they were still in the Union, why readmit them. That means they were out, seceded.

Okay, you say they seceded because of slavery, but what do you call 16 hours labor in dangerous factories, poor, insufficient pay, child labor, etc., with no trade unions yet? Yankee capitalist slavery? I think that "slavery" would have been eradicated even if the CSA would have won in less than no time. Considering flags, etc., as symbols of oppression—how about the US flag: they refused to get rid of slavery at independence, so away with it? The Dutch who sold slaves by the millions, until the last country had abolished slavery—and earned that bloodstained money, built those famous houses in Amsterdam you admire, suppressed and plundered the Indonesians, so away with that flag? Away with those clogs and windmills! See the point? Do not blame flags or symbols, do certainly not overreact.

Still I believe most soldiers and leaders fought with ideals on both sides, honor your history and do not reason too much with 21st century spectacles.

—P. van Bergen
Almere, Holland

ED.: Your definition of "civil war" is incorrect. Any armed conflict which occurs within a single polity constitutes a civil war. That war

may be for the purpose of controlling the existing state, or of reconstituting it as one or more independent nations. Thus we talk of the Nigerian civil war, in which the Ibo failed in their attempt to found a separate nation (Biafra).

Our civil war was about whether there would be one polity or two. The Confederacy certainly possessed some of the hallmarks of a nation-state. It had an army and a navy, a set of political institutions, and a constitution. But it lacked others. No country on earth recognized it a sovereign nation: it was regarded internationally—as it was by the USA—merely as a region in rebellion against the national authority. Nor did the Confederacy exercise authority over the entire area it claimed, not even for a single day.

Furthermore hundreds of thousands of whites—not to mention blacks—within the Confederacy continued to regard themselves as citizens of the United States (a point also made by William Freehling in an article in this issue). Internecine warfare between whites loyal to the Confederacy and those loyal to the Union occurred on a significant scale in every one of the 'seceded' states, with the exception of South Carolina. To someone north of the Mason-Dixon line, the war might well have looked like a "War Between the States," but to a Southerner it would surely have seemed more like a "War Within the States."

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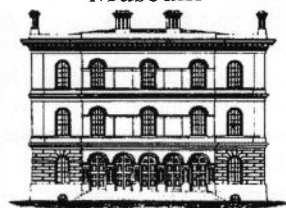
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government. The conflict of 1861-1865 was correspondingly unique, in that each side received the adherence of certain of the constituent states. The title "The War Between the States" therefore contains an important part of the truth about the conflict. *But so does "The Civil War."*

Finally, let us not forget that Jefferson Davis, in his last appearance before the US Senate, warned his northern colleagues against plunging the nation into civil war!

APOSTLES OF SECESSION

I just recently received my first issue of *North & South* through the mail, and have been reading back issues for years. For the most part, I enjoy every article. An exception has caused me great concern in Vol. 4, # 4. The article on "Apostles of Secession" uses only "selected history." I hope you can find someone to write an article on the issues I am about to raise.

Dew neglects to point out that most people in the North and South were racist in 1861. The North invented Jim Crow and Black Laws. Most Northern states did not allow African-Americans to vote, serve on juries, or hold public office. The article completely leaves out why the Southerners were so scared of Lincoln's Republican party. In 1857 Hinton Rowan Helper wrote a book entitled *The Impending Crisis*, which encouraged slaves to rise up against their masters and violently attack them, burn their homes, etc. It was a terrorist manual. Abolitionists passed the book out all over the North along with other material to fan the flames of the antislavery movement. Worse yet, many Republican congressmen endorsed the book under the title, *A Manifesto of the impending Crisis*, and in the 1858 election, the Republican party nearly doubled in size. Many of these same men had burned the U.S. Constitution and led a group of Congressmen who claimed to be answering to a "higher law." The article mentions the fear of slave insurrections, but how could the author leave out that this lawlessness and violence was being encouraged and promoted by U.S. government officials (the Radical Republicans)? In 1859 a terrorist named John Brown commits murder and treason only to be respected as a saint by these Radical Republicans. Then in 1860, the Republican Lincoln is elected president. I realize Lincoln was not that radical and was surely against slave rebellion, but how were the people of the South to know this for sure? How would the people of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas react if one of our political parties called for Hispanic immigrants, legal and illegal, to rise up and terrorize all European Americans? Burn, murder, take what property you can from the whites. What if this party also called a terrorist like Timothy McVeigh a saint and encouraged others to follow in his footsteps? Do you think

the people of those states would sit calmly and not react? What did you expect the South to do to avoid violence, death and destruction? Helper's book also wanted all Southern slave owners to be treated as common criminals. Here is a quote from *The Impending Crisis*: "We contend, moreover, that slaveholders are more criminal than common murderers.... Indeed, it is our honest conviction that all the pro-slavery slaveholders deserve to be at once reduced to a parallel with the basest criminals that lie fettered within the cells of our public prisons. Were it possible for the whole number to be gathered together and transformed into four equal gangs of licensed robbers, ruffians, thieves, and murders, society would suffer, less from their atrocities than it does now." I am disappointed that an author I admire, James M. McPherson, almost gives a rubber stamp endorsement to this book. It appalls me that some letters on the article think all the issues are now settled, and the war was fought because of racism and slavery. What a joke. Only if you believe in "selected history." Please do more research concerning the Radical Republicans' slave insurrection plans looming over the South and Helper's *The Impending Crisis*.

—W. Lynn Hatcher, Knoxville, Tennessee

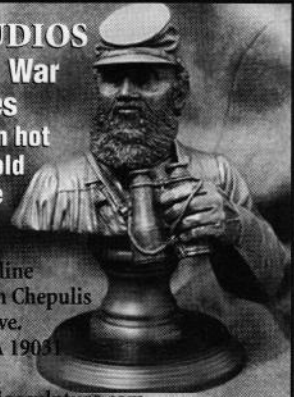
ED.: Any piece of scholarship is necessarily selective, unless it deals with every aspect of the cosmos. It is only selective in the pejorative sense if the author deliberately selects only those pieces of evidence which fit his thesis, while rejecting other equally relevant pieces. I submit that Charles Dew manifestly did not do this. He was writing about the secession commissioners, and used all available information concerning them and their mission. He did not set out to write—either in his book or the *North & South* article—a wide ranging treatment of the secession crisis. As I put it in my editorial in that issue, and it is a sentiment I know Charles agrees with, "The arguments of the commissioners yield only one piece of the puzzle" as to what caused the war.

Your own history seems not so much selective as skewed. Helper was a North Carolinian whose book "analyzed" (his data was erroneous) why the slave states lagged behind the free states in economic development. Only incidentally did it refer to the possible necessity of a slave revolt to overthrow the system (Helper himself was virulently anti-black). Small groups of abolitionists certainly burned the US Constitution, but "many" Republican congressmen did not (do you know of one who did?). On the other hand you rightly point out that secession was the result of a crisis of fear concerning the future of slavery.

That said, I am seeking—at your suggestion—an article on the "Secret Six" (backers of John Brown) for a future issue. That too will constitute a "piece of the puzzle."

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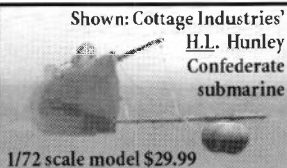
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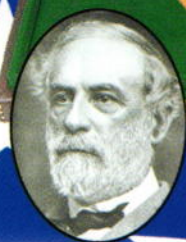
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